



# BOSTON COLLEGE

SUMMER 2012

## MAGAZINE

### ***THREE DAYS IN JUNE***

*A parent's guide to college*

BY WILLIAM BOLE

# PROLOGUE

## PARENT TRAPS

According to the best guesses of those who've made it their business to guess, the Age of Parental Anxiety kicked off sometime between the 1901 final edition of Felix Adler's *The Moral Instruction of Children* and the 1909 conferral of best-seller status on the English translation of *The Century of the Child*, a work by the Swedish feminist Ellen Key.

A list of the differences between Adler's and Key's views of child rearing would run about the length of both books combined. Adler, a rabbi who taught ethics at Columbia University, wrote a book that hearkened back to early-19th-century manuals by American clerics and divines, telling his readers, for example, that "the moral value of the *study of literature* is as great as it is obvious. Literature is the medium through which all that part of our inner life finds expression which defies scientific formulation." Key, on the other hand, her gaze turned toward a bright utopia fueled by principles of social Darwinism and eugenics, professed a "new ethic," by which the only possible "immorality" in family life would be "that which gives occasion to a weak offspring, and produces bad conditions for development." She continued, "The Ten Commandments on this subject will not be prescribed by the founders of religion, but by scientists."

It was the faith in science that made Key's tendentious and oh-so-continental book an American best-seller. Science was by the 1910s generally regarded by middle-class Americans (our most eager devourers of child-rearing counsel) as the means by which the new century would generate solutions to many problems that had perturbed human beings through the ages. As regarded child-raising, it was understood that insights into nutrition (mother's milk or cow's?), psychology (punishment vs. reward?), physiology (toilet training at three months or six?), and hygiene (one bath a week or three?) would free mothers (and fathers to a lesser degree) from having to intuit responses to children's needs on the basis of feeling or lean on the primitive practices that their own benighted ancestors had honored. Instead, responsible women, working from written instructions, would now develop healthy, bright, and well-adjusted children as easily as they crocheted fancy lace doilies.

Among the first men (and it's invariably been men for more than 100 years) to assert responsibility for turning American women into professional mothers was Dr. L.E. Holt. A pioneer pediatrician, Holt produced, among other works, *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for*

*the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses*, which was first published in 1894 and for succeeding decades held the distinction of being the best-selling medical text in American history. Holt's articles of scientific faith relied heavily on the virtues of regularity, sharp record keeping, and maternal detachment. They ran the gamut from grandma-esque counsel, such as don't play with baby just before bedtime, to instructions not to pick up a crying baby unless it was clear that the child was in physical pain, and even more harmful nonsense, as in this creedal statement:

*What things in the mother are most likely to cause colic and indigestion in a nursing infant?*

Extreme nervousness, fright, fatigue, grief, or passion are the root common causes; sometimes menstruation.

By the mid 1930s authority in these matters had passed to John Watson, a pioneer behaviorist who had gone into advertising after being run out of Johns Hopkins for having an affair with a graduate student.

Watson's best-selling *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928) was a manifesto by a man who boasted that if handed an infant and time, he could return "a doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant [or] beggar and thief"—whatever was required. His book included a chapter titled "The Dangers of Too Much Mother Love"—it apparently caused "invalidism"—in which appeared these now notorious instructions: "Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit on your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning." And while science did offer contrary views, as from Yale's Dr. Arnold Gesell, who founded the field of child development and assured mothers that children were inherently good at growing up, Watson's ideas, boosted by his skills at promotion, pretty much held sway until Dr. Benjamin Spock came along in 1946 with *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. Spock told mothers that feeding didn't have to take place on the hour, that kissing was in fact a constructive act, and that maternal intuitions were likely sound (though there were a few things mothers still needed to learn). According to some records, his book ranked second only to the Bible in sales through the remainder of the 20th century.

Our story on parents trying to understand how to do the best for their children begins on page 12.

—BEN BIRNBAUM

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## EDITOR

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Keith Ale

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Gary Wayne Gilbert

## SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Lee Pellegrini

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Tim Czerwinski '06, Zak Jason '11

## CONTRIBUTING WRITER

William Bole

## BCM ONLINE PRODUCERS

Ravi Jain, Miles Benson

## SUPPLEMENTS EDITOR

Maureen Dezell

Readers, please send address changes to:

Development Information Services  
Cadigan Alumni Center, 140 Commonwealth Ave.  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
(617) 552-3440, Fax: (617) 552-0077  
www.bc.edu/bcm/address/

Please send editorial correspondence to:

*Boston College Magazine*  
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Please direct Class Notes queries to

Class Notes editor

Cadigan Alumni Center  
140 Commonwealth Ave.  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
e-mail: classnotes@bc.edu  
phone: (617) 552-4700

# LETTERS

## POLITICAL EDUCATION

Re "The 100th Revisited" (Spring 2012): Seth Meehan's account of the scramble by Boston College President Michael P. Walsh, SJ, to get a replacement for President John F. Kennedy as keynote speaker at the University's 1963 centennial celebration was amusing to this reader, whose current view of Washington is of a sandbox occupied by political leaders who act like selfish brats throwing sand at each other. Washington was not a sandbox in 1963. But it did have woodsheds, and Walsh's choice of Massachusetts Representative Tip O'Neill '36, P'68-'72, to persuade Kennedy to accept bore fruit.

Meehan has written a tale of two great men. One was a young president who brought inspiration and hope to our nation. The other was a graduate of Boston College whose mission would be to keep Kennedy's spirit of hope and fairness alive.

Thomas H. Alton '80  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## GROUNDLED

Re "Clubland" by Thomas Cooper and Tim Czerwinski (Spring 2012): I was excited to see the picture of student EMTs preparing their first-response bags, more specifically their MERET first-response bags. I'm the founder and owner of that company and also a Boston College alum—*with* a master's degree in geophysics. The analytical fundamentals I learned while I was at Boston College have carried me outside of my early world of diectrics, stratigraphy, and three-dimensional hydrogeophysics.

Scott Decker, MS'00  
Santa Ana, California

## ON REVISION

Re "Mixed Blessings," William Bole's account of professor Ruth Langer's research into treatments of the Jewish prayer the *Birkat HaMinim* (Spring 2012): Prayer connects us to our creator—it is a time-honored bridge between the human

and the divine. It is steeped in tradition, and its wording is considered more than just poetry or convenient expression of a moment. It is a heavenly inspired text, which was crafted and codified often to replace the spontaneous and private expressions that people of a bygone era could muster.

Any decision to censor, whether because of a governmental edict to limit thought or a self-imposed limitation to avoid social clashes, has consequences that go beyond a simple redaction. Jewish prayer has grown and evolved, but sections that still represent the active concerns of the people, especially people who constantly have to defend their faith and belief, should not be subject to any censorship in a free society, or sacrificed on the altar of political correctness.

Rabbi Daniel Rosen, MA'94  
Teaneck, New Jersey

When did Boston College start using the term "Common Era"? I realize that the University is no longer the Catholic institution it once was. However, can you at least use the term "A.D." in your publications? BC is well named.

George E. Malley, JD'90  
West Roxbury, Massachusetts

*Editor's note: On this question, BCM follows the Chicago Manual of Style, which notes, "Choice of the era designation depends on tradition, academic discipline, or personal preference." The article "Mixed Blessings" treats Jewish historical and theological themes, and therefore the Common Era designation is appropriate.*

## TALKING POINTS

Re "What Right?" (Spring 2012), William Bole's report on the April 18 panel discussion that focused on the federal government's contraceptive insurance mandate: The panelists failed utterly by not explicitly rejecting the rhetoric of New York's Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, the bishop who has decided, without the support of

the American Catholic laity, that contraception constitutes a breaking-point issue. Catholics have done better historically for themselves and for pluralistic democracy when working within the system, and Dolan's brand of punditry threatens to endanger that tradition.

Matthew DeLuca '11  
New York, New York

There should be little doubt that the U.S. Council of Bishops is carrying out a plan to discredit the incumbent U.S. president. Does not this create a church-state conflict? Of course, it does!

Vito Tamboli '56  
Saint Louis, Missouri

#### BENEFITS PROGRAM

Re "Runners' World" by Tim Czerwinski (Spring 2012): Thank you for recognizing the efforts of the Campus School marathon team, a crucial branch of the Campus School Volunteers. The marathon team is the largest fundraiser for this undergraduate club, which annually raises more than \$100,000 for the Campus School.

On Marathon day, Campus School families set up a cheering section at Boston College's main gate at Linden Lane. Campus School marathoners are recognizable in their yellow marathon shirts (donated to the team by the Boston College Bookstore). Hundreds of Campus School marathoners reach their personal goal of finishing a marathon. In addition they create bonds with Campus School students and become part of a legacy.

Dan Ricciato, Director  
Sean Schofield, Volunteer Coordinator  
Campus School  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

#### MIXED MESSAGE

Re "Close-up: Holy Makeover!" by Thomas Christopher (Spring 2012): Although the general public may think that the "Immaculate Conception" refers to the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, it is distressing to find this misinterpretation in a Boston College publication. Jesus was conceived at the time of the Annunciation, which the Church celebrates on March 25. Mary, the daughter of Anne and Joachim, was conceived naturally but without original sin; we

celebrate this on December 8 (Feast of the Immaculate Conception). In the picture of St. Joseph (page 9), the angel Gabriel is telling him of Mary's miraculous pregnancy, not her Immaculate Conception.

Rebecca Valette  
Professor emerita  
Department of romance languages

Editor's note: This error was also reported by Vincent Gallagher '67.

#### O'CONNOR REMEMBERED

About 10 years ago, I was invited to contribute to a book of short tributes titled *I Remember My Teacher*. Thomas H. O'Connor '49, MA '50, H'93, who passed away May 20 at age 89, came immediately to mind, and I recalled that while he specialized in teaching "the time between the revolution and the Civil War, he was proof that there is no dull period in history. . . . He brought Calhoun, Webster, Van Buren, Clay all to life. He taught me that history is not a dull and dusty thing, but full of life and rich in humor—like Thomas O'Connor himself."

Martin Nolan '61  
San Francisco, California

#### UPDATES

■ In fall 2010, BCM reported on a project by assistant professor of English Joseph Nugent to create an electronic guide to the Dublin of James Joyce's *Ulysses* ("Bloom's Way"). With the help of successive classes of Boston College undergraduates, Nugent produced an interactive, multimedia guide to both *Ulysses* and *Dubliners* that was launched as an iPhone app on June 14. Called *JoyceWays*, it contains historical and contemporary photos, video clips, and maps detailing more than 100 locations along the routes traveled by Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. Details are available at [www.joyceways.com](http://www.joyceways.com).

■ A 40-foot long replica of a section of the Berlin Wall that was created in 2009 by fine arts lecturer Mark Cooper and students to mark the 20th anniversary of the Wall's demise ("Wall Space," Fall 2009) has been re-erected in Northern Ireland as a peace memorial. Originally installed on the Dustbowl, the canvas and wood structure was moved to Strabane, a city much damaged during the Troubles, where local

## Events: Celebrating 150 years

### October 5 • Education and Its Role in Democratic Societies

A day of panel discussions with a keynote address ("What Community Provides") by Pedro Noguera, the Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education at New York University. Sponsored by the Lynch School of Education.

### October 10 • Drew Gilpin Faust

An address by the president of Harvard University. Sponsored by the sesquicentennial speakers series.

### November 8-9 • Religion and the Liberal Aims of Higher Education

Two days of panel discussions featuring college presidents, scholars, and journalists.

For registration information on these and other events during the sesquicentennial celebration, visit [www.bc.edu/150](http://www.bc.edu/150).

schoolchildren worked with area artists to add a new layer of art and commentary.

*Corrections:* In "Identification, Please" (Spring 2012) the man identified as John Tevnan in the lower right photo on page 18 was John E. Tevnan '51, P'88. Our thanks to Richard Schrader, professor emeritus of English, for bringing this to our attention.

In Steve Pemberton's autobiographical piece "Marian's Children" (Spring 2012) the newspaper cited in the caption on page 30 as the New Bedford Times Standard is the New Bedford Standard Times.

BCM welcomes letters from readers.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and must be signed to be published. Our fax number is (617) 552-2441; our e-mail address is [bcm@bc.edu](mailto:bcm@bc.edu).

# Lipden Lane

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## CAMPUS DIGEST

In foreign affairs news, nine students were awarded Benjamin A. Gilman scholarships to take part in study-abroad programs; 16 students and recent graduates received Fulbright fellowships, which fund a year of international post-baccalaureate study; and three students received **scholarships from the State Department** to engage in intensive language study abroad, the languages being Persian, Bangla-Bengali, and Turkish. ✂ The senior class gift set a record of 1,033 participants, breaking 1,000 for the first time in the University's history. VP for Mission and Ministry Jack Butler, SJ, had agreed to eat an Eagle's Deli **Challenge Burger** (five pounds of meat, bacon, cheese, and bun) if the Class of 2012 (they number 2,327) exceeded 1,000 gifts, but escaped his deserved fate by arguing a narrow technicality: that the seniors didn't complete their task until the designated deadline of May 15 had passed. ✂ "Ocean by the marsh/The marsh fills with water, dark/A storm is coming," won a haiku award for third-grader Kara Culgin in the annual **science poetry contest** for Massachusetts schoolchildren that's been directed by emeritus professor of education George Ladd for 24 years. ✂ Assistant professor J. Elisenda Grigsby of the mathematics department has received a National Science Foundation career award to further her **work in topology**. ✂ The University gave honorary degrees to Joseph A. Appleyard, SJ, '53, formerly a member of the English faculty, director of

the A&S honors program, and founding vice president of Mission and Ministry; William V. Campbell, chairman of the board of Intuit, Inc.; Navyn A. Salem '94, founder of Edesia, which manufactures innovative foods to treat childhood malnutrition; Liz Walker, former television anchor and founder of the Walker Group, an international social service agency; and **Bob Woodruff**, another former anchor, whose experience of brain injury, suffered while covering the Iraq war, led to the launch of a foundation to serve similarly afflicted members of the armed forces. Woodruff gave the Commencement address. ✂ Terrence Devino, SJ, was **appointed secretary of the University**, supervising an office that oversees special events such as Commencement and the sesquicentennial celebration. He will succeed Mary Lou DeLong NC'71, a former senior vice president of University relations, who will retire in December. Kelli Armstrong, who has directed institutional research at Boston College, was appointed a vice president. ✂ The World History Association Book Prize for 2012 has gone to *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850*, by history professor Prasannan Parthasarathi. **Parthasarathi's thesis** rests on social development, and not merely technology—the usual suspect. ✂ The New England Aquarium and the Institute for Contemporary Art have been entered into the list of Boston cultural organizations



IT'S ACADEMIC—Oprah Winfrey (center) came to Boston College on August 2, to visit with seven graduates from the first class of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa, who were meeting with faculty and student groups to prepare for their initial year attending U.S. colleges.

that offer **free admission to students**. ✖ The University Library joined the Center for Research Libraries, which offers **online access to “little-known” documents**, including Albert Einstein’s doctoral dissertation, railroad timetables from the late 19th century, and more than 100,000 pages from the archives of the Khmer Rouge regime. ✖ Connell School dean Susan Gennaro was appointed to the **National Advisory Council for Nursing Research**, which advises the NIH on research relating to nursing practice. ✖ The (relatively) new Office of Health Promotion certified its **first class of “health coaches”**—34 students who’ve been trained to assist other students with the development of health improvement plans. ✖ Maxim Shrayder, professor of Russian, English, and Jewish studies, received a **Guggenheim Fellowship** to

support work on the contemporaneous literary response to the Holocaust by Jewish-Russian poets serving in the Soviet armed forces or as war correspondents. ✖ This year’s **Venture Competition prize (\$10,000)** went to biology majors Deckard Sorensen ’12 and Miguel Galvez ’12, who with a nanotechnologist colleague at MIT designed a water collecting device that would optimize condensation collection from small amounts of moisture in desert air. The device is named for the Namib beetle, a desert creature that Sorensen studied and that creates a personal water supply by collecting condensate on its body. ✖ *Bloomberg Businessweek* ranked the **Carroll School of Management’s undergraduate program ninth-best in the nation**. ✖ “The University’s decision to turn O’Neill Plaza into a lawn will beautify campus and give a **Dustbowl-**

**like feel,”** the *Heights* editorialized, offering further evidence that Dustbowl doesn’t mean dustbowl on Chestnut Hill. ✖ Researchers working on the history of Boston College in conjunction with several sesquicentennial projects have identified the designer of the **original Boston College seal**, long thought to be the work of late 19th-century Jesuits with time and claret on their hands. The creator was Pierre de Chaignon la Rose (1871–1940), a Harvard graduate who liked to describe himself as “a man of letters” but who published little and made a life as a purveyor of dressy heraldry to colleges and bishops. A rumor that his birth name was Peter Ross was never proven. His précis of the Boston College seal begins: “On a field *gules*, above a trimount in base or, an open book *argent* edged of the second, thereon an inscription . . .” —Ben Birnbaum



FROM LEFT: artistic directors Taccone '72, Maguire '77, and Daigneault '87.

# Stagehands

By Dave Denison

How to build an audience

It was billed as a panel discussion on the challenges facing modern American theater, but it unfolded with the feel of a two-act play. Act I could have been entitled *The Perils of a Theater Career*. Act II: *The Show Must Go On*.

The audience consisted of about 30 students who turned out on a spring afternoon to hear the stories of three artistic directors from regional theaters, all Boston College graduates. Entitled "Tough Decisions: Leading the American Theater in the 21st Century," the symposium was held April 26 in Gasson Hall and sponsored by the theater department. David Dower, the head of artistic programs at ArtsEmerson in Boston, moderated; he opened by asking each panelist to talk about a moment of great challenge.

Kate Maguire '77, the artistic director of the Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG), told of being hired to run the Berkshire Theatre Festival 16 years ago and having to work with a 50-member board of

directors. "There was one really powerful woman, and . . . 49 people who were basically there for cocktail hour," she said. At the end of her second season, Maguire recalled, the board chair took her aside and told her, "We hate everything you did," singling out a play written by Orson Welles in the early 1950s called *Moby Dick—Rehearsed*. Maguire was mystified. "I said, *Moby Dick*? The one that was based on a story by Melville, who lived in the Berkshires? I thought that was a good idea." The board chair's response: "We like happy endings, and stars."

"The next season," Maguire said, "I opened with *Camelot* and began a gradual process of 'educating the audience'—adding unfamiliar pieces into a more traditional summer lineup. In the current season, the BTG is staging several premieres, including *Edith*, a drama about the wife of President Woodrow Wilson, along with standards such as *A Thousand Clowns* and *A Chorus Line*. "It took about 10 years to

get to the point where I feel like I present the plays to the board, and they trust me," Maguire said. She also noted that over that decade she helped reshape the board, making it smaller (it currently has 38 members) and more participatory. In addition, she oversaw the 2011 merger between the Berkshire Theatre Festival and the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield to form the Berkshire Theatre Group, an organization with five theaters in three towns.

Tony Taccone '72, the artistic director since 1997 of the Berkeley Repertory Theatre in Berkeley, California, noted that "artistic directors live in this place between the artists and the public." His moment of great challenge came, he said, in the fall of 2002, five years into his tenure. "We had three shows in a row that tanked"—for various reasons. One play, John Guare's 1966 *The House of Blue Leaves*, was a dark comedy that included a terrorist bomber in Queens, New York. Poor ticket sales suggested it was too soon after September 11, 2001, to find humor in this subject. The other failed productions foundered upon irreconcilable differences between Taccone and their directors. "My general manager is walking around saying things like 'We're hemorrhaging!'" he recalled.

Taccone was by then well established—he had commissioned Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* while at San Francisco's Eureka Theatre in the 1980s—and when one of his Berkeley Repertory board members—a Bay Area entrepreneur—told him, "We pay you to take risks—keep taking them," he rededicated the company to "doing out-of-the-box stuff and taking advantage of . . . our audience, which is highly educated and actually can handle a work of metaphor," Taccone said. Recent productions include not only last year's *Three Sisters* by Chekhov, but also the 2009 world premiere of the musical *American Idiot* and the 2010 premiere of Lemony Snicket's *The Composer is Dead*. "Now we don't sell play titles, we sell artists," Taccone said.

Paul Daigneault '87, the artistic director and founder of SpeakEasy Stage Company in Boston, recalled a telling comment made by Broadway actress Alice Ripley at a recent SpeakEasy event. Ripley said young people going into theater should think of their career as a lighted

candle, Daigneault recounted. "Other people will try to blow out your candle, and you've got to keep it burning." To which Taccone added, "and there's wax dripping on your hand, and the wax hurts your hand."

Both Daigneault and Maguire said coping with fear of flops is part of the job. "If I choose a show, and I'm not afraid of it in some way, I think there's something wrong," Daigneault said. Maguire said her planning with colleagues always involves asking, "What's the worst that can happen?" And there are probably six worst things that can happen, and we prepare for all six," from poor ticket sales to losing an actor to the kitchen staff quitting.

WHEN THE DISCUSSION SHIFTED from risks to rewards, the panelists made it clear they love their work. Taccone described the satisfaction of bringing an artistic vision to the stage. "The look on an artist's face, a playwright, an actor, a director, when you realize their work. . . . You are trying to pursue deep truths through the prism of each other."

Maguire spoke of the possibility of an audience member transformed. She recently learned that one of her colleagues had abandoned moral judgments about gays after seeing the BTG's production of Terrence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* "I thought, 'That's why I do this,'" Maguire said.

The panelists also rejected the notion that theater is endangered by the proliferation of other media. "As long as I've been alive, theater has been dying," Taccone said. "It's not dying, but it's changing." As productions incorporate increasingly sophisticated sound, lighting, and video effects, there are more opportunities for talented—and technically savvy—young people to break in.

That message wasn't lost on John Delfino '12, who for the past year has been volunteering in the SpeakEasy lighting department. Like most theater students, he started out at Boston College hoping for an acting career but came to realize the technical aspects are "no less creative. You're not any less involved in the theatrical process when you're not on stage." ■

Dave Denison is a Boston-based writer.

## Collected works

Since 2003, seniors have had the option of uploading their undergraduate honors thesis, two semesters worth of research, late nights, and rewrites, to the University Libraries Digital Collections website. The site, which is accessible to all, is now home to over 400 studies, including 25 produced by the Class of 2012. Among this year's subjects:

### ECONOMIC MATTERS

**Do Patent Trolls Exist? Examining the Economic Impact of Non-Practicing Entities and Patent Infringement Litigation on Innovation**, by Ryan P. DiStefano (Economics, International Studies)

**Hysteresis in the Current Recession: Evidence and Consequences**, by Daniel Paul Sulkin (CSOM Honors)

**Nurse Practitioners: Limiting the Trade-Off between Quality and Cost**, by Margaret Julia Connolly (Economics)

**Rethinking the Phillips Curve: A Study of Recent Inflation Dynamics in the G-7**, by Mark Andrew Cloutier (Economics)

### SOCIAL ISSUES

**Defining the Role of Caregivers in Promoting Maternal Adaptation in Unintended Pregnancies**, by Christy N. Tran (A&S Honors)

**Living a Legacy: Eleanor Roosevelt as a Role Model for Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter**, by Ellen K. Zatkowski (A&S Honors)

**A Prisoner's Daughter: An Autoethnographic Account of the Effect of Incarceration on the Families of White Collar Offenders**, by Alexandra Villamia Drimal (Sociology)

**Boston: the Red Sox, the Celtics, and Race, 1945–1969**, by Nicholas Mark Dow (A&S Honors)

**To Teach and to Please: Reality TV as an Agent of Societal Change**, by Robert J. Vogel (Communication)

**Intercultural Bilingual Education among Indigenous Populations in Latin America: Policy and Practice in Peru**, by Mairead McNameeKing (International Studies)

### ENVIRONMENTS, PAST AND PRESENT

**Josephus and His Choice: Reading the 'Bellum Judaicum' within the Greco-Roman Historiographic Tradition**, by Adam D. Gross (Classics)

**Variability of Suspended-Sediment Concentration in the Connecticut River Estuary**, by Michael Vincent William Cuttler (Geology and Geophysics)

**'Better Angels': Tea Partisanship in the New Hampshire State Legislature**, by Brendan C. Benedict (Political Science)

**Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Crises: An Argument for Normal Accident Theory**, by Margaux Salome Labaudiniere (A&S Honors)



Senior theses may be read at the University Library's eScholarship site via Full Story, at [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm).

# News of the world

By Reeves Wiedeman

In the *Heights*—as in any local newspaper—the big stories from near and far have jockeyed for space

*Editor's note: In June, the University Library, in commemoration of Boston College's 150th anniversary, completed the posting of a searchable version of the Heights student newspaper, from its founding in 1919 through May 2010. BCM asked Reeves Wiedeman '08, a contributor to the newspaper from 2004 to 2008, to see what he could learn from a walk through some of those online pages.*

On November 19, 1919, the United States Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles, spelling doom for the League of Nations, news continued to circulate of a successful test by European scientists of the general theory of relativity, and the Prince of Wales visited New York City. Also on that day, in Chestnut Hill, Boston College's student newspaper, the *Heights*, distributed its first edition.

Henry Cabot Lodge, Albert Einstein, and Prince Edward earned no mention in the four printed pages, each smaller than a sheet of notebook paper. There were only two front-page stories, one about a senior class smoker, the other about a football win by "our stout-hearted lads." Inside, the paper took a moment to explain itself: "The *Heights* is for Boston College. Every particle of space in every single issue will be devoted to the greater glory of Old BC."

The *Heights* is peculiar in the way all college newspapers are. A university's history can be divided into four-year micro-generations, which means that for the past nine decades, the *Heights* has never possessed an editorial voice: It has possessed scores, each distinctive sound left behind by one graduating class to be modulated or replaced by the next one. The paper's newly digitized archive omits none of the sounds these men and women made. If you scored the winning touchdown against Notre Dame, it's there. If you

celebrated that touchdown with too much fervor, the police blotter will be there as well. If, like me, you worked on the newspaper and hope to forget most of what you wrote in your late teens and early twenties, well, all that is there, too. The *Heights*, over nine decades, has offered the stories that mattered to students, opinions that conveyed campus temperature, and advertisements featuring products that someone, somewhere, thought relevant to the lives of Boston College students.

IN LATE OCTOBER 1929, BOSTON College, only recently transplanted from the South End to Chestnut Hill, was a community of young strivers, sons of the working and middle classes who aspired to professional careers. The Great Depression, as it began, must have loomed as an extraordinary threat to those dreams, though it seems to have entered the paper mostly in connection with cheerier events, such as the 1933 freshman prom: "In view of the depression and the financial crisis, the price is the lowest for many years."

What did preoccupy the *Heights* and the *Heights* in the 1930s was football, and lots of it. The paper published more articles mentioning the sport in this decade than in any later decade save the 2000s, when it began publishing twice a week. In the issue dated November 5, 1929, the first after Black Tuesday, a

front-page story described a prospective meeting with Fordham as "a death struggle that will be the focus of national football interest." ("The great Battering Ram of Fordham," the *Heights* reported in its subsequent issue, bested the Eagles, 7–6.) Cigarette advertisements featured football players as spokesmen. For that year's game against Holy Cross, played at Fenway Park, the *Heights* published a 34-page program. Its general tenor could be summarized in the closing line of an unsigned editorial in the issue proper: "Football . . . It's a great game!"

*Heights* writers did make occasional forays into the world's serious concerns, but rarely persevered. In the spring of 1933, the newspaper turned over space each week to Gabriel G. Ryan '35, a student who wrote a column titled "State of Affairs." Ryan contributed articles about politics, economics, and world matters—President Roosevelt's emergency shutdown of the banks, a disarmament conference in Geneva, the possible repeal of Prohibition. (He concluded one dispatch, from Washington, D.C., regarding the "international monetary problem," with this summary statement: "The beer was good.") By semester's end, the column was no more.

THE FIRST FRONT PAGE AFTER PEARL Harbor included three stories on "the present emergency" along with pieces about the Christmas social, the appointment of a new junior dance committee, a banquet sponsored by the Spanish department, and an on-campus demonstration of color photography.

Then came reminders to register for the draft and articles about the difficulty one would face in finding a job if saddled with a draft number that was likely to be called. Ed Weiss '42, a *Heights* columnist, began a piece on December 12, 1942, with this glum assessment: "The general consensus is that the future is not only uncertain but non-existent." One week later, the paper described a slate of newly created spring courses in "piloting, dead reckoning, celestial navigation, nautical astronomy, and maritime law," and in February a front page story announced that, due to "present world conditions," the university rifle team, which had been

disbanded, would be revived. Ads for tuxedos and formal wear, to wear at prom and campus balls, were replaced by more ads for cigarettes. "You want steady nerves to fly Uncle Sam's bombers across the ocean," one read.

THE HEIGHTS EDITORS, FOR THEIR part, seemed to hope (like many Americans) that the whole thing would soon pass. Dick Keating '42, the paper's social chronicler, cheerily (or perhaps with mock cheer) noted that though the Japanese were "trying their damndest to disrupt our social program, we are carrying on with the noble tradition established by the lions who have gone before us." He was talking about the Christmas dance. In January, Keating wrote that he had joined the war effort: To save ink he had cut the length of his column—in which he listed each attendee at the Christmas dance—by half.

Two weeks later, a new course in Morse code was announced at the bottom of the front page, with the goal of producing students capable of sending and receiving 10 words a minute. The top story that day, however, was that Dick Keating had accepted the role of Little Eva in a campus production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Students and faculty would have been away from campus in June 1954, when Army counsel Joseph Welch inquired into Senator Joseph McCarthy's sense of decency, but they returned in time for the latter's censure. The Army-McCarthy hearings themselves earned only one explicit mention in the *Heights*, in a weekly column on national affairs by a student, Bill Kenney '54.

The *Heights*, for its part, had come out against McCarthy in October 1952, condemning him as a "demagogue" with "little regard for the intelligence of the common man." But, by and large, the anti-communist movement had support on campus. In response to a *Heights* survey several years earlier, in 1948, about how to improve the paper's coverage, one reader had suggested, "Special column on world affairs—especially the current topic 'Communism,' and its evil effects on Christian life should be stressed." The editors felt the need to append this note to their 1952 editorial decrying McCarthy's efforts: "We are not

now, nor have we ever been, members of the Communist party." The editorial itself produced half a dozen published letters, most of them in disagreement.

On October 1, 1954, The *Heights* put the question of McCarthy's possible censure to the student body. "When do we hear of the good he has done for the country?" one student responded. Opinion was divided, just as it was two weeks later in another *Heights* poll: "Should there be a Juke Box in the Snack Bar?" There was some opposition, but most of the respon-

dents were in favor. "Yes," one said. "It would liven up some of those dull classes on the first floor." ■

Reeves Wiedeman '08 is on the editorial staff at the *New Yorker*. In 2006 he was the *Heights* editor-in-chief.

Back issues of the *Heights* digitized by the University Library may be found on the Library's website under "digital collections" or viewed via Full Story, [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm)



The *Heights* front page on Friday, December 12, 1941—the first issue published after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.



Pacitto and companion on a Brighton campus playing field.

# Top dog

By Ben Birnbaum

A field report

One hot afternoon in July, I visited the habitat of a creature without a real name, whom I will call Wile E. Wile E. is a tan, hollow-bodied plastic coyote with blue eyes, and he and a twin—whom I'll also call Wile E., because I don't know which is which—are on most days all that stand between the Brighton Campus practice fields and a local pack of Canada geese who avidly dine on grass and leave behind a rich garnish of consequences.

When I first spotted Wile E., he was defending the westernmost of the fields, just below St. John's Seminary. I believe the grass was marked up for rugby, but if it had been marked for football, Wile E. would have been a wide-out on the 50 yard line, his shoulders down, his head up, and his nose pointed at Lake Street, 100 yards distant, where a man coasted downhill on a bicycle. Wile E.'s brushy tail was tilted left (it can also be rotated to up, down, and right positions), and his ears pointed forward (these, too, can be rotated,

ed). Wile E. did not move, of course, but he looked as though he might. Not a goose was visible on the ground or in the sky.

Wile E. is to some degree the descendant of Blaze and Tucker, English setters that Boston College acquired in the late 1990s, and who (along with their successors) have since been driving *Branta canadensis* from the practice facilities on Shea Field. Prior to the dogs' arrival, the responsibility for clearing goose accrual—sometimes 200 pounds a day—fell to groundskeepers wielding a lawn sweeper and wearing raincoats. "The guys love Blaze and Tucker," a grounds supervisor told *Boston College Magazine* in 2000.

But what works on fenced-in Shea Field, doesn't work on the open, 65-acre Brighton campus, I was told by Domenico Pacitto. A groundskeeper, Pacitto has become one of the University's two designated coyote handlers since "the dogs" (as he calls them) were purchased in April, setting the beasts out in early morning and

bringing them in at the end of his shift. A voluble, broad-shouldered man with leanings toward irony, Pacitto, who previously worked for the archdiocese, recalls the arrival of geese on the property in the late 1980s. Sitting in his BC-issue pickup truck a few yards from where Wile E. contemplated Lake Street traffic, he mused, "They started on Chandler Pond"—a head nod to the west—"and then they moved to Rogers Park—a nod to the north—"then here."

Soon after Pacitto and his partner began setting out the coyotes, however, the plague ended. "We haven't had a goose on the property since the beginning of football camp, in the second week of June," he said with satisfaction in late July. He said he and his partner, Jeff Pearson, thought about holding a naming contest for the creatures, but were concerned that publicity might be bad for the coyotes' tenure. (Two coyotes purchased last spring disappeared during senior week in May. One turned up in the tent erected for the School of Theology and Ministry graduation ceremonies, like a baby left on the church steps. The other remains borrowed.)

A greater threat to the coyotes came from children at Boston Public's Thomas A. Edison Junior High School, a K-8 establishment whose red-brick building overlooks the Brighton Campus playing fields. Like the geese, the schoolchildren were highly impressed by what they saw on the field one day. Animal control officers were summoned by teachers, but Wile E.—who suffers from seams where his haunches, chest, neck, and legs meet—lived to stand guard another day, when the wind blew hard and the children looked out their window and saw the coyote lying on his side. "The kids cried," said Pacitto, shaking his head. "They thought it was a dead dog." Boston College pulled the coyotes off duty until it completed an informational mailing to Brighton residents near the campus. That doesn't keep some people from wondering, however. Recently, Pacitto said, he saw a woman standing on one of the campus roadways and staring at the stock-still coyote in the field. "Is that dog okay?" she asked Pacitto. "Sure," he said, and walked up to Wile E. and knelt and poured water from a bottle into his cupped hand and brought it to the coyote's snout. The woman moved off. ■



The western wall of Stokes Hall in early summer.

## CLOSE-UP: STONE FACE

**IN SUMMER 2011**, a team of 25 masons began cladding the facade of Stokes Hall, the University's new 183,000-square-foot academic building. When the job is done, in late fall, they will have laid approximately 11,000 pieces of limestone and 44,000 pieces of granite, covering some 55,000 square feet of walls, gables (13), arches (nine), and window frames (550).

Preparations commenced in 2010, when representatives from Boston College and the architectural firm Tsoi/Kobus selected granite from a quarry in York, Maine, called Old York Blend, compatible in color and texture with the stonework on adjacent McElroy Commons and Lyons Hall. (Stone was not always imported to the Heights. It is likely that Gasson Hall, the first building erected, included stones excavated or found on-site—the remains of walls and old foundations.)

About the same time the granite was

selected, the architect and contractors chose an Indiana limestone and picked out approximately 25,000 cubic feet of quarried stone that had been seasoned in the open air for one year. Seasoning allows "quarry sap"—trapped moisture that contains discolored organic matter—to leach out. A fabricator in Minnesota milled and sculpted the limestone into arches, window frames, ornamental panels, and quoins, numbering each finished piece according to its destination on the building's exterior.

The granite and limestone facade is just that, a facade. It cloaks—but does not directly touch—a structural wall of reinforced concrete blocks. This concrete wall is clothed with a waterproof membrane that is, in turn, covered in blue foam insulation panels. The exterior stonework sits two-to-three inches of open space away from the insulated concrete, secured to the support wall by

metal anchors fixed in the exterior wall's mortar and screwed into the concrete.

The granite slabs weigh between 20 and 150 pounds each. Workers on the ground assemble pallets of stones for the area under construction using printouts of a template to guide their choice of size and color. Before setting the pieces in place by hand, the masons bevel the stones' edges to produce a smooth visual transition between pieces and, as needed, excavate depressions to create visual "depth" in the wall's profile. "They put the chisel to every piece," says Brian Black, the on-site masonry manager. A three-man team can build some 400 square feet of granite wall in a week.

After four weeks of curing, the new masonry is gone over with brushes and detergent to clean off stray bits of mortar and other debris. The facade should be good for at least a hundred years.

—Thomas Cooper

# A parent's rite of passage

Photographs by Lee Pellegrini

Text by William Bole

On a picture-perfect Sunday afternoon in June, more than 700 incoming first-year students and parents found their way to St. Ignatius Church, where they heard Fr. Joseph Marchese, director of Boston College's Office of First Year Experience, deliver the first words of greeting: "Why start here?"

They settled in for a Mass that would officially kick off a three-day freshman orientation, the first of seven such sessions offered by Marchese's office for students and parents throughout the summer. Looking out on the overflowing congregation—a sea of bright polo shirts and sundresses—Marchese, in a slate-colored summer suit, answered his own question. "We're a Catholic Jesuit university," he said, and he told of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, and of the nearly 500-year-old tradition of Jesuit education. "We're of different faiths," he said of the assemblage, "but we come, and we share," because this legacy belongs to all. Gregory Kalscheur, SJ, senior associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, celebrated the Mass. In his homily, he limned the Jesuit vision of the world, in which "God is everywhere and anywhere at work," where the soul can be nurtured in a biology lab, a political science class, or a dining hall.

Freshman orientation at Boston College and at many

other universities has developed markedly since the days when incoming students were briefed for a few hours in the basics of registration and dorm rules and then sent off to class. Orientations now are often intensive multi-day affairs, and one of the more recent innovations has to do with the parents: Increasingly, when they arrive with the students they stay.

Cheryl Bui of Villa Park, California, mother of Matt '16, remembers when her parents dropped her off at her college orientation and lingered just long enough to "make sure the dorm wasn't coed." At the Sunday through Tuesday, June 10–12, orientation in Chestnut Hill, she and more than 400 other parents took part in three tightly scheduled days of meetings that ran concurrently with the freshman students' program. They heard what their sons and daughters heard about the nature and identity of Boston College and generally about the transition from high school to college. The students roomed together in Vanderslice Hall and 90 St. Thomas More Road; the parents found accommodations off campus.

Sometimes dubbed "Empty Nesting 101," parent orientations came very early to Boston College, when Marchese, newly installed as First Year Experience (FYE) director, created a voluntary three-day parent program

OPPOSITE, TOP: Sunday bag drop-off in front of Corcoran Commons. Student orientation leaders, including Brian Lindo '14 (center), are in yellow shirts. BOTTOM: Alex Garcia '16 arrives at Corcoran Commons with his parents, George Garcia and Maureen O'Brien, of Canton, Massachusetts.







OPPOSITE, TOP: Kathryn Casey (left, mother of Kate '16, not shown) of San Antonio, Texas, and Cheryl Bui (mother of Matt '16) of Orange County, California, at registration in the Newton Room. BOTTOM: Miles Pritchard and his son Dylan '16 of Los Angeles, California, at Sunday's Mass in St. Ignatius. ABOVE: Michael Bolden '81 and Fran Cook-Bolden of Ossining, New York, with their son Alfred '16 in McElroy Commons during Sunday dinner.

in 1995 at the same time that he revamped the orientation required of freshmen. The idea was to inject into both programs the University's emphasis on academic excellence, or what Marchese calls "intellectual precociousness," at a moment when Boston College was on the cusp of becoming highly selective. There was to be an equal stress on Jesuit identity. (Additionally, for the students, there would be opportunities through the year to take part in freshman retreats and other programs sponsored by FYE.)

These days, parent orientation imparts plenty of nuts-and-bolts information about academic requirements and campus life and offers presentations on account billing, student employment, and Eagle-One, the identification cum debit card. But the higher purpose remains—to introduce parents to a certain "philosophy and spirituality of education," Marchese says.

Especially on Sunday night and late Tuesday afternoon, at the first and final sessions in Robsham Theater (along with Sunday dinner, the only sessions that brought together parents and incoming students), there were lively demonstrations of the rah-rah as well as profound seriousness. Sometimes those moods came very close together: On Tuesday, Robsham erupted with foot-stomping, handclapping "Eagles on the warpath, ooh, aah" chants. A moment later Marchese, who is a diocesan priest, was propounding the Jesuit concept of *magis* or "the more." Always seek "more of the goodness of creation," he urged.

No small part of the goal of orientation at Boston College and other institutions is to encourage parents to let go of their children, to give them space to choose their own paths. This priority has become more pronounced in the age of so-called helicopter parents who

hover over their children, "orchestrating their lives," notes Elizabeth Bracher '91, the associate director of First Year Experience, who earned a Ph.D. in applied developmental psychology at Boston College in 2004. At a Monday morning "Challenge of Transition" session in Devlin Hall, parents heard from, among others, the director of the office of residential life, George Arey. He described a typical "awkward moment": A student with whom he is discussing a dorm problem pieces together enough to say, "My mom called you, didn't she?" (Mom, says Arey, has usually instructed the director not to say she called.) "We want [students] to come in and have that conversation—before we hear from you," Arey said as a number of parents in the tiered lecture hall nodded in agreement. "We take your child's development as an adult very seriously."

The "letting go" message, however, was not unmixed. Members of several panels requested parental help, on such matters as alcohol consumption and participation in student activities (parents were asked repeatedly to remind their freshmen about the Student Involvement Fair slated for September 7). Arey pointed out that a student's Facebook page will often be the first impression he or she makes on peers—"something you need to take a look at," he recommended.

Earlier that morning, parents had heard from a student panel. "My mom put me on a plane and said, 'Good luck!'" recounted Christopher Ager '14, of Gjettem, Norway, who majors in international studies. "It worked for me." His recollection drew laughs from the parents in Robsham, as did his follow-up: "We Skype." Another student spoke of a more trying process in which her parents could not let go of "the person I was in high school," a cheerleader who thought she would do more of the same in college but quickly discovered other passions. "I was growing as a person," said the rising senior, who described her involvement with service projects such as Appalachia Volunteers. The panel was culled from the 43 student orientation leaders, who were identifiable throughout the session by their Land's End polo shirts (a different color each day), name badges, and tan Bermuda shorts.

With the economic woes of recent years, parents have become increasingly attentive to how college will prepare the way for gainful work, according to many higher education professionals. Perhaps counter-intuitively, those who speak for Boston College at its orientations have responded by doubling down on the message that a university is not an employment agency with gothic towers; students are there to discover their passions and learn how to think and serve others. The case against the "utilitarian view of education" is more urgent than ever, Marchese tells parents.

It is not a knockdown argument. "The Jesuits seem to be saying that college isn't for getting a job," said Dennis Minett, who has worked for 34 years as a pipefitter at General Dynamics Electric Boat in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. "Of course," he added matter-of-factly, "that's what everyone is here for."

This question of what college is for provoked some of the liveliest discussion in the sessions, in hallways, and over lunches in McElroy Commons. It was a conversation that seemed to evolve over the three days. The chief provocateur was Fr. Michael Himes, a popular theology professor and diocesan priest, who spoke on Sunday night to the full convocation of families.

On the darkened stage of Robsham, Himes's lecture at times seemed more like a one-person play as he paced from side to side with hands folded behind his back when he wasn't wagging a finger in the air or otherwise gesturing theatrically. He indulged in some Catholic collegiate rivalry, mentioning that he formerly taught at Notre Dame—"if you would excuse the expression," he quipped, eliciting cheers across the jam-packed auditorium. He saluted the "great faculty" at Boston College, the "great" students, and the "great sacrifices" parents make, but the platitudes were soon paired with critical reflection upon the purposes of higher education.

After a preamble about how "robust conversation" defines a great university, Himes arrived at his core contention. A great university is not about finding a job or "adding a zero to a starting salary line" or even getting into graduate school, he said. "Don't get

OPPOSITE, TOP: AT 9:00 A.M. Monday outside Robsham Theater are Peter Folkhard (left) of Pembroke Pines, Florida, who accompanied his daughter Haley '16, and Clara and Paul Chung of Oakland, New Jersey, parents of Sarah '16. BOTTOM: Fr. Michael Himes addresses parents and students Sunday night in Robsham.







OPPOSITE, TOP: Following a Tuesday panel on "Translating Education into Careers" in Devlin 008, Donald Hafner, vice provost for undergraduate and academic affairs, talks with parents Andrew Belavic (wearing nametag) of Lemont, Illinois, father of Alyse '16, and Stephen Schaefer of Miami, Florida, father of Tatiana '16. BOTTOM: Thomas Nary, M.D. (at podium), director of health services, takes parents' questions Monday morning in Devlin. ABOVE: Parents study an exhibit on residence layouts and furnishings in McElroy on Tuesday.

me wrong," Himes went on in his curiously blended accent, part Brooklyn and part Britain (having grown up in the borough, around relatives from abroad). "It's terribly important. It's just not what a university is good at. It's not what it's about." He continued—"It's about producing intellectuals." These are people who are never completely satisfied with an answer to a big question and always keep probing. Their rallying cry is, as Himes put it, "Yes, but."

At a place like Boston College, he said, students ask questions about human existence, about who they want to become, and how they can channel their passions and talents into service to the world. During the Q&A, a parent asked from his seat in a middle row what "we," parents, should fear most about what lies ahead in college. Himes replied in an instant—"that at no time in the next four years will your student shock

you and fill you with horror." The response brought down the house, although a disproportionate share of the high-spirited clapping and cheering appeared to come from younger hands and voices.

The next day, Peter and Sue Lynch of Rockville Centre, New York, were trolling the main bookstore in McElroy for some maroon and gold, as were other parents during the lunch break. Holding a clutch of hangers with Boston College sweatpants, sweatshirts, and jerseys, Lynch, a banker, said he agrees that students should try to discover their passions but feels nonetheless that "college is for getting a job that will make it possible to do well and raise a family." Encountered a day later at the entrance of Devlin, however, Lynch spoke more dissonantly about "two views," including the non-utilitarian outlook. "Not sure which is right," he said this time. Sue Lynch expressed a proposition



ABOVE: Marchese with student First Year Experience leaders in the Robsham Green Room, prior to a student panel. OPPOSITE: After the closing program on Tuesday, parents and members of the Class of 2016 depart Robsham Theater, passing a line of cheering FYE leaders.

heard often at parent orientation: "If you learn to think well, you could apply that to all areas" of professional life, in a world that is changing too fast for a narrow education.

Arthur Vera, a lawyer in Miami, had nothing less than an epiphany. A specialist in mergers and acquisitions, Vera said that after returning to his hotel on Sunday night, he mentioned to his wife that the Himes critique seemed "almost medieval," as in outmoded. But he said on Tuesday morning that after giving it much thought and hearing further presentations on the value of a contemporary liberal arts education, "my thinking has completely shifted," particularly on questions surrounding his daughter Olivia's major and career focus. He added, with a look that suggested surprise at his own words—"My daughter is here to be an intellectual."

Standing on Robsham Plaza in a crush of parents after the closing ceremony, Myles Pritchard, a wealth manager in Los Angeles, said, "When we get back home, I have to talk with my son about whether he still wants to be premed. Is that what he really wants? Or is he just doing it for the money?"

At bottom, says Marchese, the question that grips parents is an existential one: Will you care for my child? At the start of the orientation, Bui, who recently retired as a business development manager with Procter & Gamble in Orange County, California, said she came to the orientation for "peace of mind." She explained, "When you live 2,600 miles away, you have to be able to put your faith and trust in the institution." Early Monday morning, sitting out on Robsham Plaza with a cup of coffee, Bui was ready to say her confidence was increasing. ■



# Upward BOUND



## HOW ONE HIGH-OCTANE JESUIT AND THOUSANDS OF ORDINARY BOSTONIANS MOVED BOSTON COLLEGE TO HIGH GROUND

BY JAMES O'TOOLE



*This is the second of three articles by Professor James O'Toole highlighting defining moments in Boston College's history as BCM observes the 150th anniversary of the University's founding in 1863. The first article, "Class Warfare" (Winter 2012), recounted the curriculum debates that ensued when, as the 20th century dawned, Harvard University Law School declined to recognize the Boston College degree. Along with details of the University's coming celebrations, that story is featured at the sesquicentennial website at [www.bc.edu/150](http://www.bc.edu/150).*

A front-page announcement in the *Boston Globe* noted the transition. "Rev. Fr. Gasson New President," the headline read on the morning of January 7, 1907; "Head of Boston College—Famed as Preacher."

Gasson's reputation had been building locally for some time. He had served on the Boston College faculty for a dozen years, an unusually long tenure given the Jesuits' regular reassignment of personnel. Since 1904, he had also been one of five trustees of the college, which was then located in the cramped and deteriorating South End section of Boston. By dint of personality ("he worked avidly, rapidly, always," a colleague recalled), Gasson seemed well-suited to move Boston College forward. That would include, as it turned out, moving the school westward—from Harrison Avenue, where the college students shared a single classroom building with younger scholars alongside the Jesuit-staffed Church of the Immaculate Conception—to the high ground of Chestnut Hill.

LEFT: June 1908 lawn party and fundraiser on the still pastoral Heights.

Gasson's route to prominence as a Jesuit was circuitous. He was born in 1859 in a village near Kent, England, about 25 miles southeast of London. After the death of his mother and his father's subsequent remarriage, the 13-year-old decided to follow an older brother, who had emigrated, to Philadelphia. On arrival, he found the brother struggling to support himself and his wife, so Thomas began doing odd jobs for Irish servant women. One of these women, the story goes, was shocked to learn that he was a Protestant. She introduced him to a nearby convent of sisters; they gave him religious instruction before bringing him to a Jesuit at the parish church, who baptized Thomas as a Catholic on October 5, 1874. Probably under the influence of that Jesuit, Gasson acquired a middle name: Ignatius. A year later, he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Maryland. "All my relatives are Anglicans," he would say as an adult, "who have always regarded my entrance into the Society [of Jesus] with extreme disapproval."

After study and teaching in Baltimore and New York, Gasson concluded his training at the Jesuit seminary in Innsbruck, Austria. Few Americans were chosen for this placement, and his selection signals an early judgment by his superiors of his promise. After ordination, he returned to America and joined the Boston College faculty in 1894. His instructional duties were typically broad for the times: rhetoric and German, philosophy and elocution, eventually political economy and law. On and off, he oversaw the small school library (as much as anyone did).

It was Gasson's presence on the Boston lecture circuit that secured his reputation outside school walls. At the end of the 19th century, public lectures were a popular form of entertainment. In addition to making regular appearances at the Young Men's Catholic Association, Gasson was a favorite at the Boston Public Library and at the Ford Hall Forum, a Yankee institution on Beacon Hill with claims to being the oldest continuous public lecture series in the country (it still exists). Gasson's themes could be secular or religious; his lecture on "Socialism," in particular, prompted calls for repeat performances.

Unprepossessing, (he had a "short stubby body," one candid friend wrote), Gasson could command an audience. He



Thomas Gasson, SJ, in 1906, the year before he became President of Boston College.

was a man of "almost unthinkable" energy, a contemporary observed. He enjoyed give-and-take with his listeners, and once challenged three visiting Methodist ministers who insisted that the Bible had to be the sole guide in religious matters. As the incident is recounted in an obituary, Gasson demanded to be shown where in Scripture it said that only arguments from Scripture were acceptable.

Gasson was a driven man, hard on himself and exacting of others. In that, he was not unlike John McElroy, SJ, founder of the college in 1863. A priest friend recalled of Gasson, "Labor was his life." Another noted, "neither his comfort nor his health was of importance" to him. When the bell sounded at the end of the class day, it did not necessarily follow that his class was dismissed yet. Sometimes, his big ideas threatened to run away with him. Given the expense, it was

probably for the best that the college did not attempt to open a medical school, as he hoped. Still, his vision and vigor would transform Boston College.

A broad consensus was already in place for remaking the school. As early as spring 1899, at the annual alumni dinner at the Parker House Hotel, Gasson's predecessor, Read Mullan, SJ, had laid out a plan to clearly distinguish Boston College's high school and collegiate divisions. "The raising of the standards" would be essential, he said. Just as important would be a physical relocation of the college. Mullan proposed "to let the [high] school have the present buildings, and to erect new ones, which would be equipped with all the modern conveniences."

Where the college might go, Mullan couldn't say. For the time being, he reallocated space in the South End building so that the high school and college programs occupied different corridors and their students used separate entrances. This brought some relief, the editors of the college's student newspaper *Stylus* said: "The collegian may now walk forth in the calm of manhood without fear of being hustled about by our small boys." In 1904, the first high school graduation ceremony independent of the college took place.

The city's South End had built up rapidly since Boston College's founding in 1863, and the results were not always welcome. Townhouses intended to attract the well-to-do became rooming houses for a transient population. Back gardens designed in imitation of fashionable London were filled in with flimsy outbuildings. A guidebook for visitors to Boston in 1903 disparaged the neighborhood as "a faded quarter" with a "seen-better-days" air. Installment stores moved in, selling household items and clothes on credit. "Sneak thieves in church," a Jesuit at Immaculate Conception wrote in his diary one day in 1907; "four boys; pocketbooks stolen at late Mass." Another day brought a different petty crime: "Wine cellar broken into between 4 + 5 A.M., two boys caught before 6:30." What's more, the Jesuit residence was now half a century old and in need of constant repair. Complaints were frequent ("kitchen sinks clogged + overflowing, the odor rising to the heavens," a resident recorded one day).

in Watertown. Pastors of the era jealously guarded their flocks, and there was some concern that a college chapel might siphon off parishioners. Archbishop William Henry O'Connell, who was advising Gasson both as a Church leader and as an alumnus (Class of 1881), was unlikely to approve any site that posed this threat.

Thirty acres on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton, the site today of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, next caught his eye. This was "a splendid plateau, from which a delightful view of the entire surrounding country could be had," and the land drew Gasson back for repeated visits. But when he presented the idea to O'Connell the prelate rejected it. St. Columbkille's parish in Brighton Center was less than a mile away, posing the same difficulty as the Watertown location. "His Grace could not be moved from this position," Gasson later wrote resignedly.

At this point, "it seemed necessary to go to the suburbs," Gasson concluded, and almost immediately his luck

## STYLUS STUDENT EDITORS WISTFULLY IMAGINED "A MAGNIFICENT PILE OF MARBLE BUILDINGS SITUATED ON SOME GREAT AVENUE, WHERE THE WORLD MIGHT SEE IT."

An attractive parcel of land in Brookline caught Gasson's attention in early 1907, almost immediately after he became president. "Beautiful Brookline" (as residents and non-residents alike called it) was an independent town that had recently resisted an effort by Boston to absorb it. The property Gasson looked at was undeveloped—owned by the prominent Sears family in what was called the Cottage Farm neighborhood. Situated just west of Kenmore Square, Cottage Farm nestled in an angle formed by the convergence of Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, adjacent to a district subsequently known as Longwood. As a site for the college, the Sears property offered a key advantage. It was not far from the original buildings on Harrison Avenue and thus represented no great change in the mental geography of the school. But there were disadvantages, too, beginning with the price, more than \$750,000. Gasson also worried about "the swampy nature of the soil" and the "railroad which fringes the property." He decided to look elsewhere.

Next to be considered, Gasson recalled later, was "a large property . . . on the outskirts of Watertown, known as the Cassidy estate," a wedge of land along the Charles River adjacent to a working federal arsenal. This land too was swampy and pricey (though Gasson did not specify a cost). Moreover, it was located not far from St. Patrick's Church

changed, with his attention focused on a 40-acre "piece on the Brighton-Newton line." A broker had tried to interest President Mullan in this parcel as early as 1900, describing it as "almost intended by nature for the site of a large institution." It was known as "the old Lawrence farm."

Few Massachusetts families were more accomplished than the Lawrences. Three brothers—Amos, Abbott, and William—had been at the forefront of the revolution in textile manufacturing early in the 19th century. In the 1840s, they and their associates founded the city 30 miles north of Boston that bears the family name and that, with neighboring Lowell, became for a time the epicenter of American industry. In the next generation, family members turned to philanthropy and public service, with Amos Adams Lawrence (son of the original Amos) standing out as a committed abolitionist. As the controversy over slavery mounted in the 1850s on the Kansas and Nebraska frontiers, he paid the moving expenses of "free-soil" settlers; a city in Kansas bears the family name as well. To help the settlers ward off their pro-slavery neighbors, he provided guns, some of which wound up in the hands of John Brown, the radical abolitionist (then in Kansas), who may have used them in his attempt to free slaves in Virginia a few years later, helping to ignite the Civil War.

In 1862, Lawrence acquired a farm in Chestnut Hill to

which he, his wife, and seven children could retreat from the increasingly crowded city. This was a gentleman's farm, but it was also a working agricultural concern. Lawrence, a son recalled, found relief in "superintending the plowing, sowing, and reaping, planting nurseries of fruit-trees, pruning and grafting, overseeing the dairy." A main house was built, and there were various barns and sheds, together with a small workman's lodge constructed of stones from the colonial mansion of John Hancock on Beacon Hill (which had been taken down in 1863). The original farm was more than 100 acres, but the city took the eastern part of it in the late 1860s to build the second of two reservoirs for the expanding metropolitan water system. The family complained that this loss "deprived it of its bucolic aspect," but what remained was bucolic enough. Occupying a sloping plain behind a steep rocky ledge, the site had a view toward the city across the reservoir (called, appropriately, the Lawrence Basin) that was practically unimpeded. Seen from town, the land was almost the highest point for miles around.

Beacon Street marked one boundary of the farm as it continued unbroken from Boston into Newton; developers hoped eventually to divide the land across Beacon into house lots. On the other side was an extension into Newton of Commonwealth Avenue, and here, too, the adjacent land was largely undeveloped. A small cemetery fit between the road and the reservoir on the Boston side of the line, and in 1880 Archbishop John J. Williams purchased the Stanwood Estate across from it for his new diocesan seminary.

After Amos Adams Lawrence's death in 1886, the family began to think about selling off some of the farm. Most of it was sold right away to a banker named Sylvester Hinkley, who subsequently went broke, and several efforts were made to subdivide and develop it. One proposal called for a network of four streets and 50 house lots, to be laid out in the area that comprises today's Middle Campus. With the ups and downs of the real estate market, plans for the site were never realized, and the land was still open and available when Gasson started looking for a new home for his college.

Student and alumni anticipation grew in 1907 as word spread that the college might relocate. "There is no student among us," the editors of the *Stylus* wrote after Gasson had been in office less than a month, "who has a pygmy love" for his alma mater; the students would be loyal to their school even if it did not have "jewels and the social standing of the first clique." Even so, the editors wistfully imagined "a magnificent pile of marble buildings situated on some great avenue, where the world might see it, like a city on a mountain." In March, after just two months as president, Gasson

wrote to the Jesuit provincial, asking approval to buy the Lawrence property, and when the provincial was slow in responding he wrote him again and traveled to New York City to meet with him. Speaking at the annual alumni dinner in May 1907, and without revealing the site he had in mind, he told his audience that he wanted "a new location for the college, where we will not be confined to one building, but we will get a big group of buildings and grounds sufficient for the uses of a big institution of learning."

Private negotiations continued through the summer with the provincial and with O'Connell. When all the approvals were in hand, Gasson made the news public. "New Home for Boston College in Newton," the *Globe's* headline read on December 19. The deeds had been executed and filed the previous day. "The site is one of the finest in New England for college buildings," the paper opined.

The news was greeted with resounding approval by friends of the college. "I had heard that you were considering several sites," Fr. Denis Wholey, a student at the school for one year in the 1870s who was then pastor of Sacred Heart parish in Newton Centre, wrote Gasson the moment he read the morning paper. "You and your confreres have come into possession of one of the most desirable estates in the suburbs of Boston." Aiming a dart at the university just across the Charles River, Wholey added, "Cambridge may soon have to bow down to Newton." Fr. Francis Butler, an 1880 graduate and pastor of St. Leo's parish in Dorchester, was equally animated, telling his parishioners, "The cause of Catholic education in this diocese is essentially involved in the success of Boston College." Support for the school, he said, was "the greatest charity of the hour."

In acquiring the land, Gasson had committed to paying more than \$260,000. Various stocks and bonds in which the school had invested over the years were liquidated. Several private houses that had been bequeathed to the Jesuits by sympathetic supporters—mostly located in the South End, but one of them ("a constant source of expense") in Pawtucket, Rhode Island—were similarly sold off. Short-term mortgages on the existing buildings (the classroom facility, the Jesuit residence, the church) were negotiated and renegotiated. The lion's share of the down payment came from the estate of Edward Holker Welch, SJ, the last of the original five incorporators of the school in 1863, who had died three years before. Welch came from a family of successful lawyers in Boston; after graduating from Harvard, he had converted to Catholicism and then joined the Jesuits. A legacy from his father had grown to more than \$100,000. But more funds were needed.

Gasson "preached at most of the masses in behalf of the New College," a diarist at Immaculate Conception Church noted early in 1908. Contributions, most of them \$10 or less, came quickly and were recorded in an account book



Undated view of the upper reservoir (now lower campus), from what is now middle campus. The remaining reservoir and the waterworks building on Beacon Street can be seen in the distance at right.

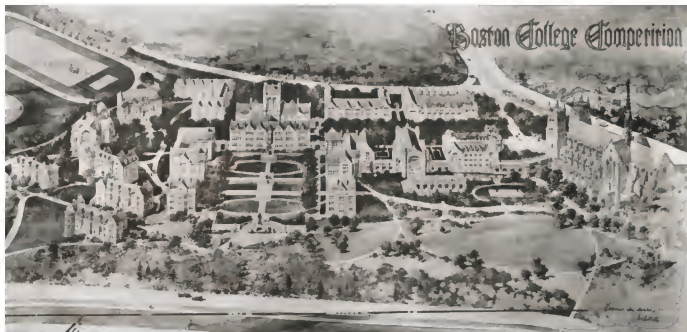
that Gasson kept in his own hand. “Mrs. Mary Dyer,” described by the president as “a poor widow, then living at 716 Harrison Avenue,” gave the first dollar. In 1908, more than \$26,000 was raised in this way, from nearly 2,000 separate benefactors. “Whoever contributed one dollar,” Gasson explained, “received a card to the effect that the said giver had donated one foot of land to the new college; to those who gave more than one dollar, not a card, but a small document was given, testifying that they had donated as many feet of land as they had given dollars.” Modern methods of fundraising were in their infancy, but Gasson seems to have had a natural affinity for them.

Current students also contributed. In January 1908, for example, a Jesuit at the college presented three dollars—one each from his students Joseph Duffy, Samuel Malone, and David Lane—and two days later he passed along three more dollars “from other boys, names not given.” The devotional sodalities of Immaculate Conception Church joined in: \$35 from the married men’s group, \$100 from the young men’s group, and \$16 from the sodality for young women. Several temperance societies, whose members took the lifelong pledge to abstain from alcohol, pooled their contributions, amounting to \$159. The mother of Fr. John Butler, pastor of a church in suburban Weymouth, sent in \$40 “on account of his fortieth birthday.” Gasson recorded \$5 from “Kathleen Meehan (deaf mute child)” and 25 cents from an unspecified “poor boy.” One woman sold off an heirloom pocket

watch, and the college realized \$114 from the transaction. Margaret Kelly, identified only by her name, set herself the goal of assembling “a mile of pennies,” and over the course of a year sent in \$67.33. With the coins laid flat, that sum would have stretched to a mere 421 feet (or so), but one imagines Gasson making much of her efforts. Slightly more than half of the individual contributors were women. None of them could yet attend Boston College, and there was no thought whatever of admitting them. Still, Boston’s Catholic women supported the school in the hope that it would continue to benefit their brothers and sons.

When summer came, the land itself was used to elicit support. At the end of June in 1908, alumni and friends were invited to the property for a “reunion and field day,” the climax of which was a formal dedication ceremony. An “immense throng,” estimated by the *Globe* at 25,000, showed up to enjoy carnival rides, vaudeville shows, and games of chance, the proceeds of which were devoted to the college’s cause. At the end of the afternoon, Gasson introduced the featured speaker, Bourke Cockran, a Catholic congressman from New York whose oratorical skills were said to rival those of William Jennings Bryan and who delivered a long address in praise of Jesuit education. In his own remarks, Gasson referred to the property (apparently for the first time) as “University Heights,” and the name would stick. The evening concluded with fireworks.

“Having reduced the debt on the land,” Gasson wrote,



The Maginnis and Walsh grand plan, 1909. Commonwealth Avenue is at right. Present-day College Road appears near the top.

"we began to devote our energies to the raising of a fund for the building." But in fact Gasson had an additional item on his agenda: redrawing the boundary line between Boston and Newton. The postal address of the Lawrence farm was Chestnut Hill. This was not an official town entity; rather, it was an informal district that straddled the border of the two municipalities. Most of the new campus lay on the Newton side of the line, the "suburbs," as Gasson had noted. Hoping to retain the close identification of the college with the city, he submitted a petition to the Massachusetts legislature to adjust the border so that the campus would be entirely within the limits of Boston. "All the traditions of Boston College are connected to Boston," he told a newspaper reporter, and he maintained (not entirely correctly), "Existing boundary lines between the two cities are indistinct." A bill was filed, and early in 1910 Gasson attended a hearing at the State House at which Newton officials voiced their objections. If the plan went ahead, they testified, Newton would not be able to widen Beacon Street or South Street (later called College Road), and each of those projects was "a necessary improvement." At the same time, the suburb would have to maintain other roads in the area, all "for the benefit of this territory" that would no longer belong to it. Considerable expense had already gone into constructing drainage and sewers, and if the land went to Boston, Newton would have essentially given the metropolis those services for free.

The bill was given "leave to withdraw" from the legislature without being put to a vote. It was a rare occasion when Gasson, who also testified, lost a debate.

In the fall of 1908, Gasson went on a tour through "most of the leading colleges of the south and west," as he recounted it, to inspect their architecture. This was an era of extensive construction on American college and university campuses. Schools everywhere—public and private, old and new—were beginning to think about the aesthetic of their buildings and green space presented to the world. Woodrow Wilson, then the president of Princeton, was remaking his campus into what he called a "little commonwealth of our own." Closer to home, Harvard was reaching beyond its "yard," aggressively buying local property in pursuit of what one scoffing alumnus called a "constructed utopia." Gasson returned from his trip reportedly impressed with the collegiate gothic architecture and campus of the University of Chicago, built (mostly with John D. Rockefeller's money) over the preceding decade. He continued to visit the property at the Heights regularly, sometimes bringing students along as a way of sustaining their enthusiasm. On one occasion, playing to this audience, he announced that "a modern gymnasium" would be "one of the first structures," although that was never his intent.

There were few Jesuit traditions in America pertaining to campus architecture. The Society's institutional buildings generally took such style as they had from whatever local designers were available. Knowing that the commission to build the new Boston College might be a very lucrative one, Gasson and the trustees decided to open it to competition. A committee of four Jesuits (including J. Havens Richards, SJ, the former president of Georgetown) was appointed, joined

by four local professional men. These latter included an architect (who took himself out of competition), a building contractor, and a landscape architect who had previously worked with Frederick Law Olmsted. Together they drew up a 20-page prospectus, "Arrangement of Buildings and Grounds for Boston College." Gasson was new to this business, and sometimes it showed. After sending a preliminary inquiry to one potential applicant, he got a starchy letter in reply. "The best architects," this principal at the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns told him, expected a small fee in advance—or else they would be investing their time and money on "the hope" of a win, as on "a horse in a horse race." The committee agreed to pay \$250 (later increased to \$300) to invited competitors. The winner would receive \$1,000 and, more importantly, the right to go ahead with the project.

The prospectus described a campus of interrelated buildings, but the focus was to be initially on a "Recitation Building." The name says something about how teaching and learning were expected to proceed at the college: Students would be presented with their lessons, and they'd

should be at a minimum "as good as in the Charlestown High School."

The Recitation Building was to be just the beginning. Other edifices "will probably be built within the next two years," and still others "from time to time as funds are available and as conditions require." A "Faculty Building," for instance, would be needed sooner rather than later so that the Jesuits would not have to commute daily from their residence in the South End. A free-standing library was described, capable of holding 200,000 volumes but expandable to three times that number; it would be "open to all students, all members of the Faculty, and for the public in general with some restrictions." Additional classroom buildings might include a "Hall of Philosophy," together with separate buildings for chemistry, physics, and biology, each with laboratories. Six "houses of retreat" were called for, each to hold 100 students. The intent of these is unclear. They may have been for use during the two- and three-day religious retreats that were required of students, or they may have been meant for longer residencies. To fulfill the college's religious needs, there would be a chapel in the

## CONTRIBUTIONS, MOSTLY \$10 OR LESS, CAME QUICKLY AND WERE RECORDED IN GASSON'S OWN HAND. MRS. MARY DYER, "A POOR WIDOW," GAVE THE FIRST DOLLAR.

be required to recite them back. This central facility, three stories high, was to have 10 classrooms capable of seating 40 students each, and three more that could hold 70. Three assembly halls were included: a large one with movable seats on the first floor ("the main feature of the plan"); a smaller one "to be used for debating societies, etc."; and a third "with benches, after the manner of a Senate Chamber." (This last was probably intended to resemble the British House of Commons, with benches facing off along two opposing walls.) A library with shelf space for 10,000 volumes was featured and, adjacent to it, four rooms where "teachers rest between class exercises." Anticipating the winter months, there would have to be some kind of coathroom for the students, though "the Trustees express a preference for the locker system." Finally, there would be three offices with attendant waiting rooms, for the president, the prefect of discipline, and the registrar; the president's office would have a fireplace. Toilets, janitors' closets, and other practical necessities would have to be factored in.

The building should be designed so that its space could later be expanded by 50 percent, but there was to be nothing temporary about it. "The arrangements," the specifications concluded, apparently citing a well-known local model,

faculty house; a separate student chapel ("without 'luxury of space'—The services will be relatively short"); and a larger church building, open to the general public and seating 1,500. This might best be located, the planners thought, on "the margins of the property, by which the public may enter freely without trespassing too far within the precincts of the College." Finally, there would indeed be a student gymnasium ("Use Brookline Gymnasium as a model") with an elevated running track, a "swimming tank," and six bowling alleys. This would be adjacent to an athletic field with a quarter-mile oval, a football field, a baseball field ("carefully placed with regard to sun"), 10 tennis courts, and grandstands for 10,000 fans.

The specifications were distributed in early January 1909, and submissions were due by mid-March, with a decision to be announced a month later. At least one applicant thought the timing "rather short," considering "the season of the year which does not admit of too intimate a survey of the site." Even so, 13 proposals came in, and on April 12 the judges made their decision: A relatively new firm, Maginnis and Walsh of Boston, took first place. The firm's senior partner, Charles Donagh Maginnis, an immigrant from Northern Ireland, had worked on a number of Catholic church and



In this "early 20th-century" view shot by professional photographer Clifton Church, the Recitation Building stands alone.

chapel commissions. In 1899, he won the commission for the chapel at Saint John's Seminary in Brighton. He had some strong ideas about how religious structures should be adapted to the American context: Not every local church, he held, had to look like Chartres. The firm he formed with his friend Timothy Walsh in 1905 would become the country's foremost designer of church-related facilities in the first half of the 20th century, with collegiate commissions at Holy Cross, Fordham, Notre Dame, and elsewhere.

Although virtually none of the winning design was ever built as planned, Maginnis's vision established expectations for the campus among alumni, students, and friends of the college over the succeeding decades. His design covered the entire property, north to south (Commonwealth to Beacon) and west to east (present-day College Road to the cliff). In it, a main gate led from Commonwealth Avenue to the Recitation Building (what now is called Gasson Hall), which, on paper, was shaped like a fat H and was surmounted by a low stump of a tower. Both sides of the entering roadway were crowded, with two buildings to the right and four to the left, one of them a massive public church. Additional structures were fitted between the Recitation Building and the athletic fields, which hugged Beacon Street. A landscaped plaza east of the Recitation Building extended to the cliff edge, offering a view of the city. The unifying style was collegiate gothic.

Ground was officially broken for the Recitation Building on June 19, 1909, a Saturday. The *Boston Herald* reported that from noon until nearly midnight, an estimated 30,000 people flocked to the property. Similar to the garden party of the year before, this event featured rides, games, music, fireworks, and, as a special draw, according to the *Globe*, "exhibitions of . . . skill" by "a group of Indians and cow boys from the 101 Ranch Wild West Show." At the end of the afternoon, the formal ceremony began, and the *Globe* noted its "purely civic character" (meaning there was no Mass or religious service). A professor from the University of Notre Dame delivered a salute

to Jesuit education. Edward Burns, an alumnus of the Class of 1880, read "Our Mother's House," a poem he wrote for the occasion. Then Gasson stepped forward carrying a shovel adorned with ribbons (red, white, and blue; maroon and gold). "The sod was tough from the trampling of many feet," a reporter wrote, and Gasson "had to take off his cuffs and stop to wipe his brow several times," playing, perhaps, to his audience. Other dignitaries took their turns, including the mayors of Boston and Newton.

At that moment, Gasson and his fellow Jesuits probably did not appreciate how much money would be needed to erect the first building (more than \$200,000), or how long the construction would take. As before, their fundraising plan relied on amassing small contributions, a method that took time. Money was often tight, and with "frequent delays in the shipment of building material," reported the *Stylus*, progress was slow. Several times, the project came to a halt. The initial design was scaled back and the building's footprint shrank, though its tower was raised to a more impressive height.

All the while, photographs of the construction site ran regularly in the *Stylus* and in local newspapers. In May 1910, students expressed their hope of attending classes at Chestnut Hill by the start of the 1911–12 school year, but that did not happen. By September 1912, a finished building seemed at last in sight. "Everything points now to the



The occupation: In late March 1913, seniors converge on what they will informally call "the tower building."

possibility of transferring the classes [to the new location] shortly after Easter," a student wrote in *Stylus*. The windows were in place, and interior decoration was underway. Francis Schroen, a Jesuit brother whose murals adorned the walls of Georgetown, Fordham, and other Jesuit properties (including the original school building in the South End), was busy painting in the main assembly hall and the adjacent rotunda. Blackboards had been installed, and the debating room on the third floor was ready.

On Friday, March 28, 1913, a sizeable contingent of the 43-member senior class "occupied" (as they put it) the building. "New College informally opened," a Jesuit chronicler recorded tersely that day, noting that Gasson and members of the faculty "went out, met the students (senior)" at Chestnut Hill. Gathering in the South End, the students had taken the streetcar to its terminus near the reservoirs and then marched up the hill. Accompanied by Gasson, they entered the new building. "Members of the class of 1913," Gasson proclaimed, rising to the occasion, "we now, in an informal way, take possession of this noble building, for the greater glory of God—for the cultivation of true knowledge—for the development of general science—for the constant study of those ideals which make for sound personal integrity and for lofty civic uprightness [sic]." The date was significant—just four days short of 50 years after the governor had signed the legislation incorporating Boston College.

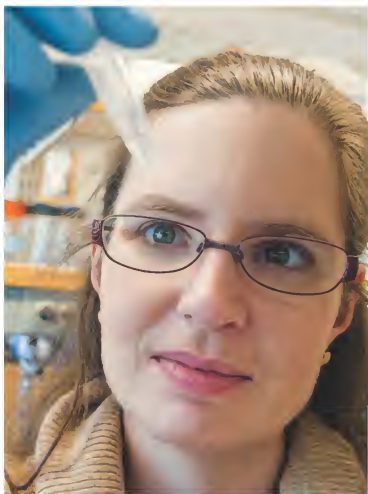
The students fanned out through the building, examining it from top to bottom. They were permitted to choose a classroom that would be theirs, and they selected "a big, sunny room" on the southeast side. "Classes went on," the Jesuit chronicler noted. William Brett, SJ, conducted his lesson in ethics, and afterward classes in psychology and

theology resumed where they had left off in the South End the day before. Instruction for seniors continued in the new building until the end of the year, though some adjustments in the schedule were needed. Equipment for the small chemistry lab had not yet arrived, so students had to return to the old school building one day a week for their experiments. By the time of the formal cornerstone ceremony on June 15 and the first Commencement exercises on the grounds, June 18, the faculty and seniors had taken full possession of the new campus. Starting the following September, all college-level classes were conducted at Chestnut Hill.

Thomas Gasson would not remain at Boston College to see more campus buildings constructed (St. Mary's Hall in 1917, Bapst Library in 1922, Devlin Hall in 1924). He left Boston in January 1914, bound, according to one Boston paper, for "the Society's rest-house" in Maryland. Later, assignments would take him to Georgetown University, to Rome, to a retreat house on Staten Island, and to Loyola College in Montreal. He was 70 years old when he died in that city, in 1930.

"It was the boast of Augustus," a Jesuit eulogist wrote, "that he found Rome brick and left it marble." Fr. Gasson, the remembrance continued, "found Boston College a dark, uninviting building, in an obscure location, little more than an appendage of the Church of the Immaculate Conception." He left it with one grand building, plans for more, and expectations of a campus that would "be unrivalled." One suspects that Gasson would have enjoyed being likened to a Roman emperor. ■

James O'Toole '72, Ph.D.'87, is the University's Clough Millennium Professor of History and the author of *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (2008). He is currently at work on a book-length history of Boston College.



# Early risers

Four young Boston College scientists are among those honored this year by the Sloan Foundation

By J.M. Berger

*Each year 126 U.S. and Canadian scholars in the early stages of their careers are awarded Sloan fellowships, in recognition of work that shows "promise of making fundamental contributions to new knowledge." The recipients—nearly all scientists, together with a few mathematicians and economists—receive \$50,000 to help support their research at the university or institute where they are employed. In announcing the 2012 recipients, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation named an unprecedented four members of the Boston College faculty: Michelle Meyer (biology), Ying Ran (physics), Dunwei Wang (chemistry), and Liane Young (psychology). These scientists join 14 previous Sloan fellows at Boston College, including, most recently, Sara Cordes (psychology, 2010) and Kian Tan (chemistry, 2011).*

*Many early-career prizes are like "beauty awards," says Larry McLaughlin, the University's vice provost for research. "How beautiful is your CV, and have you worked with the right people?" The Sloan fellowships, he says, are based on the "actual work" junior faculty have accomplished. For a look at the ongoing work of the University's new Sloan fellows, read on.*

OPPOSITE: (Clockwise from top left) Dunwei Wang, Michelle Meyer, Ying Ran, and Liane Young.

## Bacterial agent

Biologist Michelle Meyer came to Boston College in 2010 from Yale University, where she was a post-doctoral fellow with a Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biophysics from Caltech. Her research focuses on the biological molecule RNA—specifically, on the interaction between RNA and proteins, the workhorse molecules that play a part in virtually all bodily processes at the cellular level. Just 15 years ago, says Meyer, RNA was mainly thought of as a “messenger,” a molecule that transferred genetic instructions from DNA to other parts of a cell. More recently, researchers have learned that RNA also performs a complex role in regulating processes within cells, including not only the production of proteins—called gene expression—but also how much of a protein is made (a form of “resource prioritization,” Meyer says). It is now known that if RNA doesn’t function properly, a host of processes can go haywire within cells.

Meyer studies the RNA of bacteria, partly because, as she notes, the human body is mostly made up of such single-cell organisms (in fact, microbial cells outnumber human cells in the body by about 10 to one). She and her team are attempting to identify previously unknown strains of bacterial RNA in the body and to determine the proteins they control. Her work mines data recently assembled by the National Institutes of Health’s Human Microbiome Project, which sequenced the genomic DNA of bacteria taken from the healthy bodies of human volunteers. Within these DNA sequences, Meyer looks for specific patterns indicating that a functional RNA is encoded. While much of Meyer’s work involves computational analysis, she also performs laboratory experiments to examine the biological functions of the RNAs she finds spelled out genetically. These experiments involve synthesizing the RNAs and testing whether they bind to purified proteins in the test-tube, as well as studying the RNAs while they are inside bacteria by modifying their genes. Meyer’s research is exploratory; ultimately, expanded



Meyer, in her Higgins Hall lab.

knowledge of the linkages between RNA and proteins will lead to the design of drugs that, owing to a compatible molecular configuration, will bind to the RNA of harmful bacterial strains and incapacitate them, without disrupting beneficial bacteria.

Meyer and her team are also developing new RNA, in an effort to understand how RNA molecules with different physical structures perform similar biological functions. Meyer creates artificial environments in petri dishes and other media that force microorganisms to mutate and evolve rapidly in limited and specific ways. She hopes that by studying how RNA functions under varied cellular conditions she can better understand the factors driving natural evolution.

“What excites me the most about this work is the power of evolutionary forces and the incredible flexibility of RNA,” Meyer says. “There are many potential answers to the biological need to regulate gene expression, and nature has identified many of them. . . . I want to know, ‘how did nature solve this problem?’”

## Super matter

A physicist with a doctorate from MIT, Ying Ran studies the universe at the subatomic, or quantum, level, where strange effects are found that run counter to our common understanding of the physical world. At the subatomic level, the location and behavior of objects cannot be described concretely, and physicists must deal in probabilities.

Continuing an interest he pursued as a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, Ran, who joined the Boston College faculty in 2010, specializes in quantum condensed matter theory. He seeks to figure out how subatomic effects might be used to create super-materials, types of matter with properties not necessarily found in nature. For instance, Ran's research probes the properties of theoretical materials that would conduct heat but not electricity, a combination of characteristics never seen before.

Ran works primarily in the realm of mathematics. Whiteboards covered in brightly colored equations line his office. Among his particular interests are "frustrated magnets." In a conventional magnet, atoms are arranged in a square grid, as on a sheet of graph paper. With each atom aligned in orderly fashion, the magnetic poles point north-south in a well-defined pattern. But change the atomic structure of the magnet, make the squares of the graph into triangles, Ran says, and you confuse the magnetic fields. Some fields may point north, some south, and some may be rendered unpredictable.

Ran's theoretical explorations could someday have practical applications—in the development of, say, superconductors that can be put to use in high-powered computers. Certain types of superconductors are valuable because electricity flows through them without resistance, making the computer both faster and more energy-efficient. But to function well superconductors have to be kept at temperatures in the vicinity of minus 300 degrees Fahrenheit. The kinds of theoretical materials Ran imagines could someday allow for room temperature superconductors.

With the funding from his Sloan fellowship, Ran says he intends to hire post-doctoral

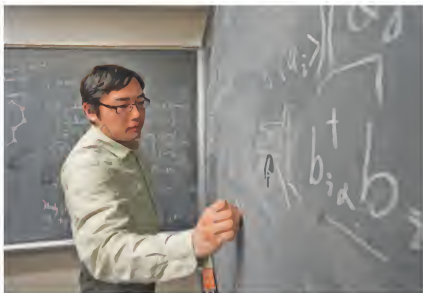
assistants to help with the mathematical testing of his ideas, including the study of "fractional quantum hall physics in solid state materials in the absence of magnetic field," which, he says, is "a somewhat new direction" in condensed matter physics.

At the most fundamental level, Ran aims to understand what gives materials their unique combination of properties. "There are many, many motivations" for getting into science, he says, "but the central motivation is curiosity."

## Transformers

Dunwei Wang earned his Ph.D. at Stanford and held a post-doctoral fellowship at Caltech before joining the Boston College chemistry department in 2007, where he researches the harvesting, storage, and transmission of renewable energies. Wang is developing new materials at nanoscale that he hopes will help break the hold of nonrenewable fossil fuel energy sources. In 2011, he won a National Science Foundation career award, which supports young scientists in their research.

One line of Wang's work involves the design and fab-



Ran, in a Higgins Hall classroom.

rication of intricate silicon-based nanowire structures for collecting solar energy. His goal is to achieve a higher rate of energy collection than that of the more conventional crystalline silicon-based photovoltaic cells. In line with this project he is also developing silicon nano arrays to transport the captured energy more efficiently.

A second avenue of investigation underway in Wang's Merkert Chemistry Center laboratory focuses on achieving cost-effective solar-powered "water splitting," a process in which water molecules are separated into their components, oxygen and hydrogen, the latter being a clean-burning, sustainable fuel.

Wang described these efforts in the March 28 issue of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. Using a process known as atomic layer deposition (ALD), he and his associates created molecule-thick wafers of hematite, a common form of iron oxide that is naturally sensitive to light. The wafers were placed in water, and the displacement of electrons when light hit the hematite caused hydrogen to separate from oxygen. The plentiful supply of hematite in nature and the encouraging results with the ALD wafer suggest further work in this vein.

Wang's research also extends to development of a more efficient lithium-ion battery. Working at the nano scale, he is in the process of fabricating an anode, or electron receptor, with a recharge rate at least five times that of current lithium-ion anodes.

During his three years at Boston College, Wang has been awarded six patents for his solar water-splitting and battery

designs. Typically, says Larry McLaughlin, a patent application makes several claims to unique technology, which are almost always rejected by the patent office for not being sufficiently different from existing designs. Applicants then re-apply, submitting arguments to defend their claims. Wang's application for one of his anode designs made 22 claims and came back with 20 of them approved in the first round, McLaughlin says.

## Moral compass

Liane Young first encountered the Trolley Problem as an undergraduate philosophy major at Harvard: A trolley is on course to hit five people. Would you throw a switch to put it on a track to strike only one person? The choice is easy for most individuals: Save the five and sacrifice the one. But what if the solution calls for a more personal intervention? Would you, say, push a man off a bridge into the trolley's path, so that the trolley will stop before it hits the five people? For most individuals, the answer is no, even though the outcome, numerically, is the same.

Young seeks to understand the social and biological motivations behind moral judgment—what she calls moral intuition. It's a quest that led her to cognitive psychology (her Ph.D. field at Harvard) and to neuroscience. She was a post-doctoral associate in MIT's department of brain and cognitive sciences for three years before coming to Boston College in 2011.

Using magnetic technologies, Young examines what happens in the brain as people make moral decisions. She first stimulates a specific part of the brain using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). This temporarily and locally disrupts normal processes. Then she uses magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to track how this disruption affects the mental work



Wang (right), in his lab in the Merkert Chemistry Center, with Ph.D. student Rui Liu.



Young, in her McGuinn Hall "morality lab."

of moral judgment. For example, in an experiment that Young conducted with researchers at MIT and published in April 2010 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, volunteer subjects received TMS to the brain's right temporoparietal junction (RTPJ)—above and behind the right ear. They were then asked to evaluate a scenario with several variables: A woman puts a white powder in her friend's coffee, for example, thinking it's poison, and it turns out to be sugar; or it is poison, and it kills him.

The results suggested that disrupting the RTPJ caused subjects to judge the would-be poisoner less harshly if the powder was sugar and no harm was done. In other words, without a fully functioning RTPJ, test subjects tend to base their judgments more on outcomes than intentions. Although the RTPJ has emerged as an area of special interest in Young's research, she and her team are investigating other parts of the brain, including the prefrontal cortex, where MRI scans indicate some moral decision-making activity.

"For a while now, I've been really interested in moral intuitions and where they come from—and the extent to which people share these intuitions," Young says. "When someone has a different set of intuitions, how do you know who's right?"

## Here and now

This year's awarding of four Sloan early-career awards places Boston College in rare company. Only eight of the 51 schools with a 2012 Sloan fellow can claim more: Caltech, Harvard, UCLA, University of Chicago, Columbia, Stanford, University of Texas at Austin, and Yale.

Asked to explain Boston College's showing, Arts and Sciences dean David Quigley notes that while the number of Sloan grants in 2012 "was dramatic, it wasn't surprising. A policy of going after the best young scientists we can find has been a priority for some time, supported by tens of mil-

lions of dollars invested in facilities improvements, new faculty positions, and research support for those faculty."

And, Quigley adds, the city of Boston holds intrinsic appeal. "People who study for doctorates tend to meet and marry other academic hard-chargers," he says; the prospect of living in an "international center of technology, medicine, finance, law, and academe becomes a highly attractive selling point" in the midst of a two-person job search.

In the past 15 or so years, Quigley says, the departments of psychology, mathematics, and biology have "leaped into the big time, just as chemistry and physics did before them, and this has been noticed by ambitious young scientists." He cites a recent search to fill two positions in mathematics. The University had assumed it would lose several prime candidates to other institutions and so made offers to four—and all four mathematicians accepted. "Fortunately," Quigley says, "we had some retirements coming." ■

J.M. Berger is a writer in the Boston area.



"Sloan Rangers," an @BC audio slideshow featuring Meyer, Ran, Wang, and Young, may be viewed via Full Story at [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm).

# C21 Notes

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## Way station

By Thomas Cooper

The first last lunch

"**H**I, I'M BILL, AND I'M A MEMBER of the Iowa-Nebraska Luncheon Club." So began the introductions at a lunch held May 7 in the Francis Thompson Room of the Burns Library. "Bill," sitting at one end of a long table, was William Neenan, SJ, vice president and special assistant to the President of Boston College. At the other end sat John T. Butler, SJ ("Fr. Jack"), vice president for University Mission and Ministry. Seated between them along either side of the table were five young women and seven young men who would be graduating in exactly two weeks. The Thompson Room is imposing, with a wall of towering stained glass windows, a vast Oriental rug, and ornate wooden bookcases housing leather-bound tomes, but the mood was informal, and the students were casually dressed, it being, in fact, a pre-exam study day.

The noontime gathering was the idea of Karen Kiefer '82, associate director of the University's Church in the 21st

Century Center, which cosponsored the lunch with the Office of Mission and Ministry. A chance reminiscence with Mary Caliendo Rather '82, her college roommate, got Kiefer thinking about "the number of students who go through Boston College without getting to know either of these two men." She e-mailed the senior class, inviting all to sign up for the chance to win "one last lunch before graduation with two of Boston College's living legends." Within a day, there were 140 applications. Kiefer wrote out the names on strips of paper and put them in a box, and Neenan drew 12. The winners hailed from throughout the University—five from the Carroll School of Management, one from the Lynch School of Education, and six from the College of Arts and Sciences—and from around the country (Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas).

Neenan believes in the power of lunch-



Table for 14 in the Thompson Room, with Fr. Butler at left and Fr. Neenan at right.

es, having founded the Iowa-Nebraska Luncheon Club (he is a native of Sioux City, Iowa) in 1981 as a way to provide Midwestern students an occasion to gather with others who root for the same sports teams and speak the same language. He has since helped launch 14 additional regional support groups, from the Peach Club (a secessionist offshoot of the Pecan Club) and the Sooners to the Salmon Club (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Montana) and the Rocky Mountain Club.

This gathering began with a prayer led by Neenan: "Life is a journey. . . . This is a way station; we ask that You walk with them as they walk with You." Lunch was a buffet of sandwiches, salads, chips, soft drinks, and Boston cream pie. Over the rustlings of sandwich wrappers and bags of chips, Neenan and Butler spurred the conversation, asking the seniors to share a particular memory from their four years on the Heights.

A number of recollections concerned

sporting events—Andrew Steichen, a finance and accounting major (headed for an investment firm), remembered being in the stands at Conte Forum his freshman year when the Eagles beat Duke in basketball.

Seth Woody, a theology major (with a double minor in faith, peace, and justice and environmental studies) who will spend the coming year as a monastic intern at an Episcopal monastery across the river in Cambridge, cited the view from the top of St. Mary's Hall, "seeing all the way into Boston." Grace Horner, a French and environmental studies major who has joined a nonprofit social justice advocacy organization in Denver, and Tyler Schenk, who majored in finance and marketing and now works for UBS, both mentioned the Dustbowl—the grassy expanse between McElroy Commons and Fulton Hall that will be reduced and reconfigured by the construction of Stokes Hall—drawing nods from others around

the table. Schenk recalled walking across the wide-open space at 4:00 A.M. as a freshman. "It was totally quiet; that's when I started liking being here."

At a pause in the conversation, Butler asked Neenan if it would be okay to make the students do some work for their meal (to which Neenan deadpanned, "Well, they're going to have to wash the dishes"). In a few days, Butler told the seniors, "You will become trustees, as it were." He wanted to hear what each of them thought the school did well and where it needed "to step up, to improve."

The ensuing conversation ranged widely, but several subjects recurred. Matthew Vigliotta, a political science and philosophy major (headed for a tech start-up in New York), praised the University's efforts at "educating the whole person—mind, body, and spirit," from the core curriculum to "the presence of the Scriptures," and he cited the Jesuit concept of *cura personalis* (care for

the whole person). Woody, referring to the recent deaths—unrelated—of two students (Franco Garcia '12 and Michael Gannon '14), said the school is "great at community, at mourning and grief and the celebration of death." Boston College, he added, "handles these things with grace." Another student echoed this saying, "You never feel like you're not cared about, especially in times of need."

Others commented that they liked the open presence of religion at Boston College. "In high school, we tiptoed around religion," said Sarah Wickman, a marketing major with a minor in human development who will join a social media company. Christine Micuna, an accounting and marketing major, agreed, but added, "Religion is not forced on you." A couple of students, including Wickman, praised the opportunities for reflection offered by programs such as 48 Hours, Kairos, and Arrupe International Immersion. "The school thrives on its volunteer opportunities," commented biology major Tom Murphy.

WHEN THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO areas needing improvement, these same spheres reappeared along with new ideas. Four students mentioned a need for more opportunities to participate in the fully subscribed programming of Kairos, 48 Hours (designed for first-year students), and Arrupe International Immersion. John Kelly, an accounting and theology major who went on a Kairos retreat as a senior, said for many students it is "easily one of their best weekends here" and provides an important network. "It can be hard as a freshman to find a community," said Kelly, who will join DeLoitte in the fall.

The disconnect between students' daytime and nighttime lives concerned a number of the seniors at the table. English and philosophy major Aaron Staedinger, who was a resident assistant in Walsh Hall, said that students have "a great ability to go to class and volunteer" and then, come Friday night, "completely forget" that side of themselves. He wanted more effort expended on building a sense that "you are this person all the time, not just Monday through Friday, nine to five." Matthew Vigliotta noted that it's important to "grab hold of [students] early."

Andrew Steichen asked Fr. Neenan how a Jesuit institution such as Boston College deals with the high cost of education, which poses an obstacle for many who aspire to college. Neenan replied that the University remains committed to its need blind admission policy and to meeting the full need of students through grants and loans. One goal of the current capital campaign, he noted, is to increase the endowment and "take the pressure off tuition as a contributor to financial aid

funding." He went on to say that "Boston College is poised to be a national and international leader," adding, "and Ignatius would say, 'Go for it.'"

Before offering a closing prayer—"We ask You to continue to bless them for they have blessed us"—Butler thanked and praised the students for their comments and their critiques. "It's a messy world with messy answers," he said, "but as long as you keep asking the questions, we'll move forward." ■

# You had to be there

By James Martin, SJ

The lost humor of Jesus

I RECENTLY ASKED SOME DISTINGUISHED New Testament scholars about Jesus and humor. The scholars show Jesus as clever and articulate, but there are few moments in the New Testament that strike readers today as funny. Wouldn't it make sense that, if the men who wrote the Gospels wanted to portray Jesus as an appealing figure, they would highlight his sense of humor?

So why is there so little humor from Jesus in the Gospels? I put that question to Amy-Jill Levine, a New Testament scholar at Vanderbilt University and the author of *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (2006). Her book holds that Christian preachers often misrepresent Jesus's words and deeds because they fail to understand the Jewish context in which he lived.

Levine pointed out that what was seen as funny to people living during Jesus's time may not seem funny to us at all. Most likely, she said, for someone in first-century Palestine, "the parables were amusing in their exaggeration or hyperbole. For example, the idea that a mustard seed would have sprouted into a big bush that birds would build their nests in would have been humorous." Indeed, the very incongruity of the parables—the topsy-turvy, seemingly absurd nature of

their message (the poor are rich; the rich are poor; the blind see; the sighted are blind)—is the stuff of comedy. The absurdity is even richer when listeners realize that Jesus's insights are, in fact, true.

In his book *Laughing with God: Humor, Culture, and Transformation* (2008), Gerald Arbuckle, a Marist priest, agrees. In first-century Palestine, he suggests, people most likely would have laughed at many of Jesus's intentionally ridiculous illustrations—at, for example, the idea that someone would light a lamp and put it under a basket, or that a person would build a house on sand, or that a father would give a child stones instead of bread.

"Humor is very culture-bound," Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, professor of New Testament at Boston College, tells me. Fr. Harrington illustrates with the story in Mark of the "Gerasene demoniac," in which Jesus cures a man possessed by a "legion" of demons—"an obvious shot at the Roman occupiers," notes Harrington—then dispatches the demons "into a herd of pigs, [which are unclean for Jews], and they jump off a cliff and drown in the sea."

"The Gospels have a lot of controversy stories and honor-shame situations," Harrington continues. He points to the debate, narrated in Mark, over "paying taxes to Caesar" for example. As

Harrington relates, the issue “is identified as a ‘trap’ from the beginning,” laid by temple priests, Pharisees, and Herodians. With his response (“Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s”), Jesus emerges with his “reputation for great wisdom intact (honored) and his opponents frustrated (shamed).”

“I suspect,” says Fr. Harrington, “that the early readers found these stories hilarious, whereas we in a very different social setting miss the point entirely.” Let me repeat that: *hilarious*.

It’s hard to imagine a good storyteller—or an itinerant preacher, as Jesus was—who doesn’t appreciate the value of humor. Jesus undoubtedly knew he had to “grab” his listeners, attract them quickly through a funny story, a clever parable, or a humorous aside. If one knows where to look, the Gospels reveal a man with a great sense of joy and playfulness.

Take the parable of the talents, found in both Matthew and Luke, in which a

wealthy man entrusts his servants with money for safekeeping before he sets off on a journey. To one servant he gives five talents, to another two talents, and, to a third, one talent. After a time the rich man returns. The first servant, he discovers, has invested the money wisely and has made five more talents, which pleases his master. The second has made two talents over the two he had been given. The third, however, has not invested the money at all and merely returns the one talent. He is punished for his lack of industry. This parable is often invoked by preachers today to illustrate the need to use our “talents” in life to the full; Jesus himself drew that serious lesson from the story.

But for the listeners of the day, there would have been an element of the absurd in the story, as well, for a talent was the equivalent of a worker’s daily wages for 15 years. The idea of a wealthy man handing over to a servant 75 years worth of wages would have touched the sense of the ridiculous in his hearers.

Besides the parables, there are other indications that Jesus of Nazareth was a joyful person. At one point in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus observes that he is being castigated by some critics for not being as serious as John the Baptist. “John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, ‘He is a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking,” says Jesus, “and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard.’” In this way, the Gospel records criticism of Jesus for being high-spirited.

Moreover, Jesus embraced individuals who demonstrated a sense of humor. In the beginning of the Gospel of John comes the remarkable story of Nathanael, who has been told by his friends that the Messiah is from Nazareth. Nathanael responds, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

This is a joke about how insignificant the town was. Nazareth was a backwater where only a few families lived.

And what does Jesus do? Does he castigate Nathanael for mocking his home-



Nathanael (resting on one elbow) under a fig tree as Jesus (in white) approaches, depicted by French artist James Tissot.

town? One might expect the dour Jesus of modern imagination to say, "You who condemn the small town will yourself be condemned!"

Jesus says nothing like that. Nathanael's humor doesn't bother him at all. In fact, it seems to delight him. "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" he says. In other words, here is someone he can trust. Nathanael becomes one of the apostles. Jesus's welcoming of Nathanael into his circle is perhaps the clearest indication that he had a sense of humor. It also indicates that John, the writer of the Gospel, appreciated a humorous story enough to preserve it in his narrative.

St. Peter is another Gospel figure often portrayed in ways that can be seen as comic. To begin with, like many of the disciples, he repeatedly misunderstands Jesus's message, which leads to some arguably comic moments, even in the most serious of situations. At the Last Supper, when Jesus washes the feet of the disciples as a symbol of the way in which his followers must treat one another (in humble service), Peter balks. "You will never wash my feet," he exclaims. Jesus replies that if he cannot bear to have his feet washed, then he will have no part in his ministry.

A somewhat uncomprehending Peter shouts, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" One can imagine Jesus smiling inwardly at Peter's bluster and thinking, "Well, that's not exactly what I meant."

Peter bursts with enthusiasm. His rashness—by turns charming, touching, and sometimes funny—leads him early in the Gospels to ask Jesus to command him to walk on water after he sees Jesus doing the same on the Sea of Galilee: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus does just that. So Peter enthusiastically jumps out of the boat (perhaps to the astonishment of the rest of the disciples on board), finds that he can in fact walk on water, and then promptly sinks. "Lord, save me!" he cries. Jesus then reaches out his hand to save his impetuous friend.

PROFESSOR LEVINE NOTES THAT there is no way of knowing for certain whether instances of Jesus's humor were expunged from the Gospels by the early

Church. But she points out that in many of the noncanonical Gospels—those not officially accepted by the early Church—there are several occasions on which Jesus laughs.

Levine says the early Church Fathers (the major Christian theologians of the early centuries) were, in general, focused on combating heresy, which was no laughing matter. They would probably have seen the genre of humor as inappropriate for their times, and thus downplayed it.

Hugo Rahner, a German Jesuit theologian (like his more famous brother, Karl), wrote a wonderful little book in 1967 called *Man at Play*, which traces the notion of playfulness in Greek, Roman, and early Christian thought. His work underlines how early Church leaders consciously moved away from humor. St. Paul, for example, wrote in his Letter to the Ephesians that they must avoid any talk that is "silly." In the early third century, St. Clement of Alexandria warned against "humorous and unbecoming words." In the late fourth century, St. Ambrose said "joking should be avoided even in small talk," and St. Basil maintained that Christians "ought not to laugh nor even to suffer laugh makers."

However, St. Augustine, a student of Ambrose, recommended some joking

from time to time. Later on, in the 13th century, St. Thomas Aquinas commends play in his writings, saying that there is a virtue in playfulness, since it leads to the mind's relaxation and the soul's refreshment.

More than a few present-day Christians strike me as being closet "Docetists," adherents of an early Christian heresy. That is, they seem inclined to think of Jesus as God simply pretending at being human. But if we accept the idea of Jesus as fully divine and fully human, we must accept *all* human attributes for him—a sense of humor included. ■

On July 14 in Robsham Theater, James Martin, SJ, M.Div.'98, Th.M.'99, delivered the annual Evelyn Underhill Lecture in Christian Spirituality, sponsored by the School of Theology and Ministry. Martin is the author of *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (© 2011 by James Martin, SJ), from which this essay is adapted with permission of HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. The book may be ordered at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm).



For video of Fr. Martin's Underhill Lecture "Laughing with the Saints" go to Full Story, [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm).

## Coming events

### September 20 » Women in Interreligious Dialogue

A talk by Rosemary Radford Ruether, the Carpenter Emerita Professor of Feminist Theology at the Pacific School of Religion and Graduate Theological Union.

### October 1 » Handing on the Faith

A talk by Archbishop Harry J. Flynn, emeritus of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

### October 16 » Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New

Book launch and lecture by Colleen Griffith, associate professor of the practice of theology, and Thomas Groome, professor of theology and religious education, both of Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry.

### November 2 » New Evangelization for Today's Parish

A workshop with David B. Couturier, O.F.M. Cap., director of pastoral planning for the Archdiocese of Boston, and Jane E. Regan, associate professor of theology and religious education, School of Theology and Ministry.

For details of these and other events, consult the Church in the 21st Century Center's website at [www.bc.edu/church21](http://www.bc.edu/church21).

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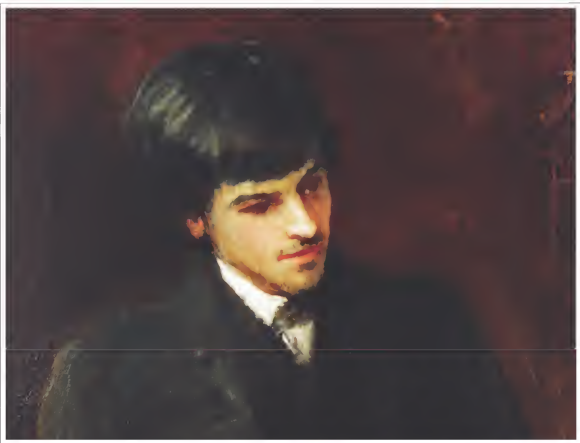
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A poem

From the 2012 senior project exhibition

In his senior year, Joon Park '12 created more than 300 ceramic pieces—including this one nearly five feet tall—for the two-semester independent project required of all studio art majors. This sculpture, notes Park, derives from the moon-jar shape produced during Korea's Chosun (Joseon) dynasty (1392–1910) and is an amalgam of clay, cement, paint, and gold leaf. The title, *NEO GU RI*, refers to a popular South Korean brand of noodles. Park will study ceramic arts at Harvard in the fall.





W.B. Yeats at 20, in a portrait painted by his father, John Butler Yeats.

## UNDER AGE

By Fintan O'Toole

Waiting for Yeats

*Boston College's John J. Burns Library recently published online (and for the first time anywhere) William Butler Yeats's first play—Love and Death, penned in adolescence. The little-known manuscript was tucked in a box of letters and other paper memorabilia acquired by the University from Michael Yeats, the author's son, and its publication prompted these words by a noted Irish essayist:*

**T**HERE'S A CASE TO BE MADE THAT ANYTHING MOST authors wrote before the age of 25 should be burned.

So the question has to be asked: Why should we preserve, and publicize, this play *Love and Death*, which William Butler Yeats scrawled into five smallish notebooks in 1884, when he was 18? There are good reasons why the play was never published or produced. It is not a lost masterpiece.

Juvenilia can be looked at in two ways. The first is reductive. Youthful scribbles reduce the writer, show his feet of clay, his thought processes naked and raw. But you can also see such work as a point of departure, leading to a necessary self-invention. *Love and Death* helps us to understand how heroic an act that self-creation was in Yeats's case.

Most of us are not geniuses, and so we like to imagine that it's not our fault, that geniuses are born and not made. And that does happen. Arthur Rimbaud did all of his poetic work by the age of 19 and had nothing left to say. Keats died at 25, leaving a canon that remains extraordinarily radiant.

More often, however, geniuses have to make themselves. And they have to do it the hard way, gradually. This is, at first reading, why *Love and Death* holds our attention. We can't take in a work like this innocently—as if we don't know that it was written by a

teenager who will become one of the great poets of the English language. But if we try to look only at the work, what we find is still moving: W.B. Yeats does not yet exist.

Yeats summarized *Love and Death* decades later in his *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1915): "It's a long play on a fable suggested by one of my father's early designs. A king's daughter [Ginevra] loves a god seen in the luminous sky above her garden in childhood, and to be worthy of him, and put away mortality, becomes without pity and commits crimes, and at last, having made her way to the throne by murder, awaits [his coming] among her courtiers. One by one, they become chilly and drop dead, for, unseen by all but her, her god is walking through the hall. At last, he is at her throne's foot, and she, her mind in the garden once again, dies babbling like a child." Yeats's summary leaves out a convoluted subplot that makes Miss Prism's three-volume novel in *The Importance of Being Earnest* seem as snappy as an episode of *The Wire*.

*Love and Death* is all serpentine narrative, artificial vocabulary, and feverish borrowings (from Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Keats, William Morris and the pre-Raphaelites, and others), and it reads like a drama written by a person uninterested in people. It's the product of days and nights alone in the bedroom and study.

And yet, a reader can glimpse a writer who is drawing from his literary influences the ability to inhabit a forceful linguistic rhythm. In retrospect, not in context, it is possible to hear the great poet in the making:

I see the company of timid ghosts  
At evening also when the sun is low  
Each with its finger to its lips goes by  
Poor wild unutterable mysteries.

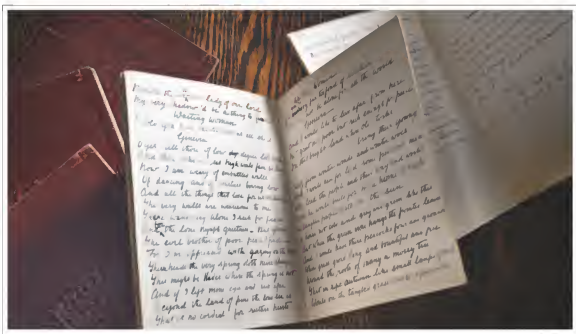
YEATS EXTRACTED ONE POEM FROM THE PLAY, A POEM called "Love and Death," which in 1885 became one of the first he published:

Go ask the springing flowers,  
And the flowing air above,  
What are the twin-born waters,  
And they'll answer Death and Love.

What is most poignant about the play, however, is not these moments of fluency, but other, long, wearying moments, when, working in the stony soil of adolescence, Yeats labors over images he doesn't know what to do with yet. To a remarkable degree, certain images that will be important to Yeats's later work were already in his head at 18. There is a haunting sense of continuity when you come across these and think, my God, they will be with him all his life. Two brothers in *Love and Death*, one of whom is mortal and the other immortal, serve to foreshadow, as the late scholar Richard Ellmann put it, Yeats's "later theory of the divided or double self." Images of a big house (home to quiet gentility) and of a roofless tower (locus of wildness, violence, and the withholding of violence) where "forever whirls the wind"—will also run through his work. As an adult, Yeats will idealize Coole Park, the big house of his friend and patron Lady Gregory, and choose to live in Thoor Ballylee, a 16th-century tower.

Perhaps the trope from the play that will have the most currency in Yeats's later work is what has been called elsewhere *Liebestod*, the fusion of love and death. This is not at all a Yeatsian invention. It came to Yeats through an English tradition—the slightly feverish, sickly, pre-Raphaelite imaginings of Swinburne and Rossetti, and Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci," a poem Yeats would later directly echo. The convention ranges in its themes from the male poetic love for a dead woman (Dante) to the lovers dying,

Yeats's unimpressive first play, in five notebooks.



like Romeo and Juliet, in each other's arms. It is everywhere in the popular culture of the 19th century, including in song ("Barbara Allen"). In compositions known as murder ballads the undertones can be sadistic (young man seduces woman, then, because she struggles, he murders her violently).

Particularly after World War I—particularly in reaction to World War I—Sigmund Freud took the Romantics' coupling of love and death and tendered it as *eros* and *thanatos*, the love instinct and the death instinct, as a way of trying to understand human behavior. Yeats's great achievement as a writer is nearly the same as Freud's—the transformation of a 19th-century aesthetic, in which he grew up, into a 20th-century one. In him, the *Liebste* survived and changed, bridging the Victorian sensibility and the modernist view. He was able, eventually, to take it out of its sickly sweetness into the tough beauty of, for example, Deirdre's farewell to her lover Naoise in the eponymous play *Deirdre* (1907): "Bend and kiss me now/ For it may be the last before our death./ And when that's over we'll be different;/ Imperishable things, a cloud or a fire./ And I know nothing but this body, nothing/ But that old vehemence, bewildering kiss."

The love and death theme is not entirely a male trope, but it is primarily a male adolescent fantasy. It sublimates a concern known well to teenage boys: the unavailability of a desired woman, indeed, sometimes, of any woman at all. It freezes *eros* in youth and purity. And it has the great attraction of fixing erotic passion while short-circuiting the messy business to which *eros* leads: living with someone, rearing children, and growing old.

Yeats would engage the love-death theme over the course of his creative life. It would become an adult fantasy that, in some later poems, he would take very far indeed, as in "He Wishes His Beloved Were Dead" (1899):

Were you but lying cold and dead,  
And lights were palling out of the West,  
You would come hither, and bend your head,  
And I would lay my head on your breast;  
And you would murmur tender words,  
Forgiving me, because you were dead . . .

Yeats liked to imagine his beloved Maud Gonne—actress, muse, founder of the nationalist Daughters of Ireland, who rebuffed him and married another man—as being dead. He wrote a poem called "A Dream of Death" in 1893 depicting Gonne in her coffin ("And they had nailed the boards above her face"), and he sent it to her.

As Yeats evolves from being a rather gauche 18-year-old poet to being a great modernist over the course of 25 years, you might expect he would find new themes. What *Love and Death* reveals is that this isn't what happens with Yeats. The images of contrasting buildings, the *Liebste*, the divided self—these remained with him. Among them they would account for a great deal of his work. For Yeats, the task would be finding the contexts in which those images could resonate.

And so this question: What experiences made Yeats a great poet? What elements are missing from *Love and Death* that will later live in his poetry?

I would suggest that the first missing element is his love affair

with Maud Gonne. If he hadn't met her in London in 1889, if she hadn't refused him (repeatedly) and married John MacBride in 1903, if she hadn't existed, Yeats would have had to invent her. In a sense, that's what he did in his first play. He invented a doomed love that cannot be fulfilled except in death. Those later, spooky poems about her death while she was still alive have power because they're about something real. They're not literary tropes that he borrowed from books.

The second experience that changed him was theater. Very often, those who love Yeats's poetry tend to tolerate his work in theater—as if, well, he had to be doing *something* when he wasn't writing poems. Reading *Love and Death* is a reminder that the experience of theater, of forming language to hold its own on the stage, changed Yeats as a poet. You can see in *Love and Death*, in which he's trying to write for the theater and can't, how much this inability imprisons his poetry. If Lady Gregory—cofounder of the Abbey Theatre, transcriber of Irish legends—hadn't urged Yeats into theater, compelling him to write language that functioned, Yeats might have become no more than the minor pre-Raphaelite he once seemed destined to be.

The third absence in *Love and Death* is perhaps the most crucial of all: It is Ireland. The only Irish stamp on the manuscript of this play is the name and mark of the stationer on the inside cover of the notebooks ("W. Carson, 51 Grafton St., corner of Stephen's Green, Dublin"). The play's literary influences and cadences are in the English tradition. Not that Yeats didn't know he was Irish; but he didn't know he was Irish as a poet.

In *Love and Death*, the teenage Yeats is desperately trying to write poetry that has mythic lift. But he hasn't yet identified a fact that doesn't sound derivative, fey, and artificial. He hasn't discovered the mythic Iron Age Irish hero Cúchulain, who will provide him with an endless source of dramatic narrative and poetic imagery. He hasn't embraced the Irish mythology that will boost his aesthetic yearnings up onto the high wire, making them dangerous, making them political, and drawing resonance from their place in a revolutionary cultural movement. The question he would ask after the 1916 Rising—"What stalked through the Post Office?" (the answer being the spirit of Cúchulain)—has not yet occurred to him.

With the shift from Ginevra to Cúchulain, Yeats will go from staking nothing on his poems to staking everything. And that will do wonders for his imagination and his language.

I've long understood that Yeats, the later Yeats, did an enormous amount for Ireland, and brought honor to our country. Reading *Love and Death*, I'm reminded that Ireland did quite a lot for Yeats, too. ■

Fintan O'Toole is a columnist and theater and literary critic for the *Irish Times*. His books include *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (2009) and *Shakespeare Is Hard but So Is Life: A Radical Guide to Shakespearean Tragedy* (2002). His essay here is drawn from a talk he gave in the Burns Library on April 23, "Yeats's *Love and Death: A Writer's Beginning*."



Fintan O'Toole's complete talk on *Love and Death*, and the manuscript penned in Yeats's hand, may be viewed via Full Story at [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm)



Photograph by Shellburne Thurber, part of *House: Charged Space*, a McMullen Museum exhibition in 2001.

## HOUSE PROUD

By Matthew Batt

No place for the undecided

RENTING, LIKE LONG-TERM DATING OR THE DECISION to stretch out graduate school, is at once pathetic and comforting. It announces to the world simultaneously that you aspire to grow up and move out of your childhood bedroom and that you are not yet ready to be on your own.

My wife, Jenae (rhymes with Renée), and I decide to look for a place to buy, and in Salt Lake City, the best neighborhood we can afford is Sugar House. But the only way we can live here is to fix the house up ourselves. And so we do, despite having no experience or any other reason to believe we can.

We tear out the carpet, imagining at any time we might come across hypodermic needles, charred spoons, or crack vials, and we sand and refinish the old maple floors. We tear down a hideous

shack and put up a hammock. We tear off fake wood and refinish the kitchen cabinets to look like what we would have bought new.

Then we turn to the kitchen floor, where we will peel up seven layers of linoleum and put down slate. Only two kinds of slate are readily available: really expensive and really cheap. We place an order for the cheap stuff.

WHEN THE TRUCK ARRIVES WITH OUR MATERIALS, I REALIZE the depth of our folly. It is a tractor-trailer equipped with a forklift. On the flatbed, all shrink-wrapped with BATT written on it in red grease marker, sits a huge lump of boxes, subflooring, and bags of thinset (a flexible, quick-drying mortar). I was expecting a few boxes of tiles and a little stack of drywall-like backerboard—noth-

ing more than would fill the back of my old Land Cruiser. The load on this semi would demolish my truck. The tile alone, we are told, weighs more than 2,000 pounds.

To install the tile, we have to yank up the old flooring. The books we have suggest it will be fairly easy work—just take a spreading shovel and scoop it on up. It is not the job I imagined. The vinyl is glued to itself in the most onerous ways. A big sheet will come off with a tug, but then we spend 45 minutes peeling away a section the size of a ham sandwich. While I am hacking one stubborn piece to smithereens with a box cutter, Jenae tells me to look up.

The light in the kitchen glitters with linoleum mores. “Pretty,” I say. “Wonder what makes the air shimmy like that.” There is a pause. Even the linoleum stops shining for a second.

“There’s no asbestos in this stuff, is there?” Jenae asks. I say I don’t want to know and just keep at it.

“Don’t put your hand under the blade when it’s running,” the clerk at Home Depot says helpfully.

“Or in the bucket of water when it’s on.”

Bucket of water?

Finally we get down to the subfloor: a layer of plywood on top of the joists. Because we’re putting down the mass equivalent of a Nash Rambler in slate tiles, we need to gird things so we don’t end up with a two-story basement kitchen. This is surprisingly quick work. Take a few four-by-eight sheets of three-quarter-inch plywood, and before you know it you’ve got a new, solid floor. Add to that a layer of backer board—essentially a thin board of cement woven with fiberglass—and the floor is prepped for tile.

In the space of a day, we have torn out an old floor—or seven—and put down two new layers of subflooring. We are doing the job fast, and we are doing it right.

AND THEN WE RENT THE DIAMOND-BLADED MASONRY SAW.

I am no longer feeling quite so jaunty. After all, you don’t have to be a master of logic or physics to realize that that which can cut through rock can also blithely make its way through bone.

“Don’t put your hand under the blade when it’s running,” the clerk at Home Depot says helpfully. “Or in the bucket of water when it’s on.”

“Bucket of water?”

All I see is a portable tray and a table saw.

“BYO bucket,” he says. “For the water. Gotta keep the blade wet or it’ll seize right up and, you know, fly off or something.”

A blade that is tipped with diamonds. Has potential to fly off. I am taking careful notes.

One reason the slate we bought is so cheap is that it’s only partially finished. The tops of the tiles have been left more or less as

they came from the quarry. The sides are cut so they’re uniform, and the bottom is milled so that its surface will take the thinset and dry without air pockets, which could cause a tile to crack over time. In order to successfully install a slate floor—at least according to the perfectionist definition of it—you have to not only lay the tiles out according to (a) the line of sight along which you’ll most often look at the floor once the tiles are down and (b) the overall impression given the slight variation in color from tile to tile, but also (c) the unique surface texture of each tile. In other words, we—make that Jenae—will try to orient the tiles geographically, chromatically, and topographically.

While I set up the saw and hold what I hope will not be the last cigarette between pre-diamond-bladed fingertips, Jenae lays out the floor. She washes each tile with a wet rag so she can better see and understand whatever lessons it has to teach, gauge its ability to fit into the larger community of tiles already down, and either place it in accordance with her principles or toss it outside for me to practice my cuts.

I fill a bucket with water, set up the stand, gingerly position the saw, and prepare to plug it in. I know full well that folks with less supposed education than I have operate these menaces year in and year out and wind up with just as many toes, fingers, and noses as they started with, but I am not prepared to chalk any-

thing up to a learning experience. I double-, triple-, and—what the hell—sextuple-check to make sure I am not suddenly wearing dangle jewelry, a ponytail, or necktie that can get wound up in the saw and reel my face into the blade like an about-to-be-spiral-cut ham. I don my shop-teacher safety glasses, hold my breath, and flip the switch. With an industrial scream, gritty liquid sprays my face. The saw is so loud I can’t be sure that something hasn’t already been severed. I hit the switch and check my fingers, to confirm that what’s spraying is water. With that clarification, I go about my ritual of enumeration, turn the saw back on, and proceed to transform a tile hewn from a multibillion-year-old rock into little Lincoln Logs of slate.

How like a child, how like a god.

FINALLY IT’S TIME TO MORTAR THE TILE TO THE FLOOR. I get a bag of the thinset, read the instructions, and whip up a batch to the consistency of cake frosting.

For a moment Jenae and I kneel on the backer board, the ancient tools of masons in our hands. I think about saying something to commemorate the occasion. Maybe we should write something sweet and sassy on the subfloor. After all, unless things go exponentially wrong, nobody will ever see it again. But we don’t want to jinx things, so, without fanfare, Jenae dips her trowel in the bucket, back-butters some thinner on the first tile, slaps some more on the floor, trowels it as if she’s combing the wet hair of a monstrous child, and eases the tile into place.

“Good job, baby,” I say. “You just rocked.”

She looks at me and then regards the first tile suspiciously. She lays the second tile in the same fashion, but it sits a good half-inch higher than the first.

"Maybe it'll settle," I say. "Let's keep going and we'll see what happens."

A flat, incredulous look from Jenae. She butters up another tile, slaps more thinset on the floor, puts the tile down, and voilà! Now we have three different tiles at three different heights.

Jenae repeats the process with two more tiles, with similar results. The difference in height is never more than three-quarters of an inch, but that will be awkward to navigate in dress shoes, if not bare feet.

With what I would call fury, Jenae claws up the five tiles and turns them on their backs like so many hopeless turtles. The tiles in question have dramatically different amounts of thinset on them, but which amount is correct, there's no telling.

We decide to use more thinset on the floor and less on the tiles. We scoop as much as we can with the trowel, use its edge to comb the thinset into neat little rows, and set the tiles back into place, jiggling them a bit and applying more force than I think we should. The result is good. It looks as if everything is going to be just fine.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BUYING A HOUSE THAT MAKES the world seem more permanent and worthwhile, but also more tenuous and fragile. You begin to fine-tune your sensibilities and notice more of what's going on around you because you are now a part of it. It's your neighborhood. Your yard. Your crack house, by damn. It's *important*.

You begin to make investments that more transient folks don't. You pick up trash on the way to the dog park. You keep an eye on your neighbors' mail when they go out of town. You glare at cars driving too fast down your street—not because you have kids, but because your neighbors do, and that makes them the neighborhood's kids too. You stand a decent chance of inheriting them versus some random adoptive family if, you know, it came to that. You begin to see that just because something is the way it is doesn't mean it can't be fixed. ■

Matthew Batt, MA'97, is an assistant professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. This essay is excerpted from his new book, *Sugarhouse: Turning the Neighborhood Crack House into Our Home Sweet Home*. Copyright © 2012 by Matthew Batt. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. *Sugarhouse* may be ordered at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via [www.bc.edu/bcm](http://www.bc.edu/bcm).

## Someone on TV Uses the Phrase, 'The Soul's Smile,'

by Robert Cording

and I'm wondering just how soulful  
it might be if we could see it—  
a flash of teeth, white (not whitened),  
like a choir of angels singing I'm A Soul Man?  
But just as I'm having my superior laugh,  
your white-haired, godly face barges in,  
and here you are, dying all over again in my mind.  
It's an end of the week late afternoon  
and a few of us who have come  
to the hospital are caught up in the usual  
meaningless politics of the school  
where we all teach, bitching about  
an impotent administration, and the new  
evaluative tools of colleges gone corporate,  
when, at last, we look over at you  
who are dying in pain, and you're just smiling,

so far beyond our chatter it seems you've learned  
the alchemy of creating something wonderful  
out of anger and frustration. Or maybe  
I just wanted you to be our Prospero,  
your comic vision of life returning the world,  
same as always, but seen with new eyes  
and a semblance of order never glimpsed before.  
I don't know. But, standing there, complaining  
and joking to cover our pain, the slow surge  
of your smile took us all in;  
and, while nothing in it contained a message  
from another world, I knew right then and there  
how much I needed to let go of  
in order to say, as you did, so gently  
and without the slightest hint of hurry,  
that you needed to lie down now and sleep.

Robert Cording, Ph.D.'77, is the Barrett Professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross and the author, most recently, of *Walking with Ruskin: Poems* (2010).

# TURF WARS

By William Bole

When the states were in charge of immigration

Long enshrined as a federal prerogative, immigration control in the United States has recently been marked by jurisdictional struggles between state and national authorities. Last June's Supreme Court decision to strike down parts of a restrictive Arizona statute is one high-profile example. During the first hundred years, however, state governments were largely in control of U.S. immigration.

Only in 1882, with the passage of the landmark Immigration Act, did Congress lay claim to a general, peacetime interest in overseeing entry into the country. And even then, the U.S. Treasury, short on manpower and infrastructure, paid state officials to enforce the federal law and quietly allowed states to keep in place their own, tougher policies. From 1882 until 1891, when a new Immigration Act provided for the federal government's complete control, supervising immigration was a joint project of U.S. and state authorities.

So writes Hidetaka Hirota, Ph.D. '12, in his dissertation-based essay, "The Moment of Transition: State Officials, the Federal Government, and the Formation of American Immigration Policy," which won the 2012 Louis Pelzer Memorial Award of the Organization of American Historians for the best essay in American history by a graduate student. Hirota, a Japanese citizen with a B.A. from Jesuit-sponsored Sophia University, in Tokyo, will be staying on as a postdoctoral fellow at Boston College this fall; a longer version of his essay will appear in a future issue of the *Journal of American History*.

According to Hirota, U.S. histories often overlook the extent to which the Atlantic seaboard states—New York and Massachusetts, in particular—laid the groundwork for national immigration legislation. Since the colonial era, both states had required inbound shipmasters to pay "head money" for any passenger who posed a risk of washing up in a publicly supported almshouse. Of particular concern were "lunatic, idiot, maimed, aged, or infirm" passengers,

according to an 1837 Massachusetts law that called for a thousand-dollar bond for any questionable individual. In 1847, New York created a statewide immigration control board; Massachusetts followed four years later with its own agency to address "alien passengers and foreign paupers."

It was contention over "head money" that delivered the first blows to state immigration systems, according to Hirota. Shippers argued against the practice, and the Supreme Court ruled in 1876 that only Congress had the power to impose such charges and thus regulate foreign commerce. States responded by pushing successfully for what became the 1882 law, which was modeled on their statutes.

New York and  
Massachusetts not only  
barred so-called undesirables  
from entering the country.  
They also deported  
immigrants who became  
public charges, including  
some who had become  
U.S. citizens.

Hirota chronicles the extent to which British authorities tested the U.S. immigration system—emptying Irish poorhouses and, between 1883 and 1884 alone, giving 23,536 of their wards tickets to America, with what they hoped was sufficient pocket change to slip through the enforcement nets. As Hirota writes, New York and Massachusetts not only barred such so-called undesirables from entry. They also deported immigrants who became public charges *while* living in this country (including some who had become U.S. citizens), which exceeded the 1882 law. The federal law had provisions for returning criminal immigrants to their country of origin; indigents, however, could only be excluded at the gates, "not deported," Hirota says. Massachusetts had been deporting "alien paupers [from its] almshouses and lunatics hos-

pitals" throughout the 19th century, expelling 8,000 people to Ireland, England, and Canada, as well as to other American states, between 1876 and 1878, for example.

The state-federal partnership dissolved with the 1891 Immigration Act, which completely federalized immigration. In that law, among other provisions, Congress chose to adopt the states' view that indigent immigrants should be deportable. In so doing, and for a time, Washington brought federal immigration law into close alignment with practices honed by the states.



Allocca, on the roof of Google's New York City office.

## Trendspotter

By Nicole Estvanik Taylor

YouTube's Kevin Allocca '06

Every day, contributors to YouTube upload 70-plus hours of new material per minute; in the span of 24 hours, visitors to the website view 4 billion videos. Kevin Allocca scrutinizes this activity. He is YouTube's trends manager—hired for the new position in 2010 by Google, which owns the site, with the mandate to, as he puts it, “make sense of it all.”

Allocca's first major project was launching [youtube.com/trends](http://youtube.com/trends), a “what’s hot” miscellany for which he blogs conversationally on topics such as “Top 10 Commencement Videos of 2012” and “How Many Happy Birthday Videos Are Posted Each Day?” (“Over 2,000,” he says.) The site also contains public versions of feeds and filters he has developed with Google's engineers to sift through YouTube's store of usage data. Allocca spends a few hours each day and evening tracking down what he calls “cultural phenomena”—which videos are most viewed? Shared? Parodied? What if you sort by topic, age, gender, geography? He is fascinated by the input from countries recently added to YouTube's domain. “One of my favorite things to do,” he says, is “to ask what’s the big music video today” in Ghana or Peru or Malaysia.

Allocca works mostly at Google's

block-long, 15-story office in Manhattan's Chelsea district, where employees cruise the hallways on scooters. He also manages a California-based team of four “social media and programming coordinators” who chat online with YouTube's 61-million Facebook followers and tweet links to videos (e.g., “Meet the proud owner of America's smallest apartment”).

Journalists and academics doing research about YouTube—or about Syrian unrest, say, or the Japanese tsunami—seek out Allocca. And, increasingly, he's tapped for speaking engagements. His TED talk on why videos go viral has garnered a quarter-million YouTube views since February.

With a double major in communication and film studies, Allocca moved to New York after graduation, aiming to write TV comedy. But an HTML course he took as a lark steered him toward the *Huffington Post*—where he generated satirical text and video (“if you had a good idea and the time to do it, they'd post just about anything”)—and later to editing the widely read TV news industry blog at Mediabistro.com. “When I started college,” he marvels, “none of the jobs I've had existed.”

Nicole Estvanik Taylor '01 is managing editor of *American Theatre* magazine.

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ABOVE: The Boston College men's hockey team and head coach Jerry York (center) celebrate their third national championship in five years, on the ice in Tampa, Florida.  
Photograph: AP Photo/Mike Carlson